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Embrace me as I am: Japanese Pornography for Women and the Fan Community surrounding Male Porn Stars

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Abstract

This exploratory research looks at female fans of male porn actors in *Jōsei-muke* Adult Videos (AV) in Japan. *Jōsei-muke* is a pornographic genre aimed at heterosexual women that features good-looking male porn actors called *eromen* and *lovemen*. This new genre arose as a reaction against the decline of the porn industry due to the popularity of porn streaming websites and is an attempt to expand the market by capturing heterosexual women as new, heretofore neglected, audiences. Although the media sometimes depict this new as a form of female sexual emancipation, the genre is only economically viable because of the support (*oshi-katsu*) by “fans” of *eromen* and *lovemen*.

This thesis argues that to read the reversal of the “male gaze” as female emancipation based solely on the content of the pornographic products is misleading. New forms of pornography must be placed in the context of pre-existing gender issues in Japanese society and in the everyday life worlds of those who consume it. The issue arose here is not only that of gender identity but also economic ones. Based on one year of field work at a series of *eromen* and *lovemen* fan events and participation in the online community of fans, this research shows that fans are largely indifferent to female sexual emancipation that is supposed to be encouraged by *jōsei-muke* AV and its business collaborators who produce sex toys and other self-pleasure products. Rather, it has become apparent that female fans look for intimate interactions with male actors at series of events in order to restore their confidence and to have their femininity recognised by attractive male others.

The interactions with *eromen* and *lovemen* provide recognition for female fans through monetary transactions. Theory of recognition (Honneth 1995, Taylor 1994) indicates that recognition should be mutual; however, the monetary transaction changes the mutuality and the intentions of each actors (female fans / *eromen* and *lovemen*). For *eromen* and *lovemen*, it is about money and fame. Female fans, on the other hand, gain recognition even though it has to be purchased. Purchasing recognition thus appears a rational choice in a world in which romantic relationships come fraught with obligations, mutual commitment, gendered expectations and the risk of rejection. Supporting activity, or *oshi-katsu* underlies such a commodified recognition. And by supporting, it means that choosing one favorite among many others determines one’s identity according to whom/what one belongs to and to support is a self-less devotion which also functions as self-realisation.

The commodified recognition, while it frees women from unpaid emotional labour and gives a power to have an influence over their self-realisation, conceives potentially exploitive nature. Especially for those who heavily rely on commodified recognition, which I employ structural vulnerable (Quesada et al 2011). The experience of vulnerability is excersied by how one position the self in the society. For female fans here, I have seen some women identify themselves as “incomplete” in heteronormative matrix due to the lack of romantic experience and marriage. The free market economic system which transforms recognition into commodity and provides recognition concerns its ethics because of its inclusivity. In other words, to gain recognition through purchase has been becoming a part of social relationship, rather than a luxurious commodity. From a microscope of a specific fan culture surrounding male porn actors in *jōsei-muke* AVs, the thesis sheds light on the problem of the ethics of commodification and consumption of recognition and contributes to the discussion of the recent trend of transaction of intimate activities in *oshi-katsu*.

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Introduction: Fantasies of the Coin-Operated Boyfriend

“Coin operated boy
Sitting on the shelf he is just a toy
But I turn him on and he comes to life
Automatic joy
That is why I want a coin operated boy

Made of plastic and elastic
He is rugged and long-lasting
Who could ever ever ask for more
Love without complications galore

Coin operated boy
He may not be real, experienced with girls
But I know he feels like a boy should feel
Isn't that the point that is why I want a
Coin operated boy
With his pretty coin operated voice
Saying that he loves me that he's thinking of me
Straight and to the point
That is why I want
A coin operated boy”

The Dresden Dolls (2003)

While walking back home from an interview with my informant Yoshiko, this song suddenly popped into my ears from a random play list on Spotify. The song is about a woman who has lost her lover and suffers from loneliness. She comes up with the fantasy of an ideal man who would work according to her desires, just by putting in dimes. This coin-operated boy would provide “love without complications galore” because he is set to perform in such a way. As a heart broken woman, the protagonist in this song craves for the restoration of her confidence, or in other words, recognition, as in a sense of definitions of Axel Honneth (1995), a condition for a fully achieved subjectivity and “good life”. The lyrics corresponded with the story that I have just heard from Yoshiko, one of my main informants on my research journey.

Yoshiko, in her late 30s, works as an office clerk for a small real estate company in a suburban area of Metropolitan Tokyo. As a fan of male porn actors in *jōsei-muke* Adult Videos (in short, AVs), a female-friendly genre of Japanese pornography, her main hobby is to attend “events” where she can interact with her favourite male porn actor. The nature of these “events” varies from group-based meetings to private “dates”, during which female fans can enjoy

temporary intimacy with them, for instance talking on the phone or enjoying karaoke with them privately. Furthermore, some male porn actors work as male escorts so that female fans like Yoshiko can have highly intimate moments with her favourite man.

The interview took place several months after our first meeting at café in Shinjuku, after her work routine had ended. While sipping a cup of herbal tea, Yoshiko disclosed her story: “I have fallen in love many times in the past. There was a man whom I have considered as a marriage partner. I did literally everything for him, from cleaning, cooking, and waiting for him until late in order to respond to his sexual desire. But for him, it turned out that I was just his convenient”. Although my reaction was sincere, her devotion to her ex-lover reminded me of the widespread heteronormative cliché in which women were supposed to sacrifice their own life and comfort to perform physical and emotional labour, often unrequited by the men they performed this labour for. “Graduating from a women’s junior college, my first love affair was with a man nine years older than me. A boss at my first work place, and he was married with children. I might have not been mature enough, but he was so sweet and made me feel like a woman. I cannot forget that feeling”, Yoshiko continued sentimentally. Simone de Beauvoir’s iconic statement “[o]ne is not born but rather becomes a woman” (1953:273), does seem highly relevant to the phenomenon that I have been encountering despite its age. From the way Yoshiko has spoken, to “become a woman” seems to entail a sense of fully-attained female subjectivity, and is thus to be desired passionately. “That’s perhaps why I love seeing my favorites although it can become expensive”, Yoshiko told me with a huge smile. Just like putting in dimes, Yoshiko purchases opportunities to interact with her favorite male porn actors. She is not attempting to win the love of her favorite man, as that would be “love with complication galore”; rather her aim is to confirm her sense of femininity through highly heteronormative interactions in a confined realm.

The song *Coin-Operated Boy* by the Dresden Dolls (2003) tells the story of a woman who bears the scars of a traumatic experience from a past relationship and is now enjoying a fantasy with a plastic toy boy. The toy boy only tells her sweet things, as that is what he is programmed to do. There is no drama, no responsibility and no childcare pressure. The irony here is that her relationship with the plastic boy only lasts while she is feeding him coins. In other words, the investment is equivalent to the recognition of femininity she receives. This thesis examines this phenomenon by asking what *jōsei-muke* AV is, how different is it from the male desire-centred AVs, and how female fans like Yoshiko engage in fan activities involving male porn actors. It is also an inquiry into the expectation fans have regarding their interactions with male porn

actors, and how the fan community influences their understanding of love, intimacy, and romantic relationships.

Female Friendly Pornography

My first encounter with the genre of *jōsei-muke* AVs was through the documentary *Inside Japan's Porn Made for Women* (Vice 2015) featuring SILK LABO, a female friendly production line of Soft on Demand (in short, SOD), one of the monopolistic porn production companies in Japan. The documentary focused on how sex and relationships were depicted from a female perspective in SILK LABO, differentiating it from mainstream AVs which often embodied a male gaze on female bodies. This also reminded me of the increasing demand for alternative pornography in Europe, especially calls for feminist and queer forms of pornography.

As Annie Sprinkle, a former porn actress, a stripper, prostitute and sex-positive feminist with a Ph.D. in human sexuality, once stated: “The answer to bad porn isn’t no porn...it’s a try to make better porn!” (Sprinkle in Houston 2013). Feminist pornographers such as Tristan Taormino, Ovidie, and Erika Lust attempt to produce pornography which depicts male and female pleasure equally in a range of styles: educational, romantic, or hardcore. Feminist pornographers standing on the sex-positive side believe that pornography can be empowering female audiences by showing an egalitarian vision of sex. In addition, the role plays of BDSM which is often misunderstood as the depiction of violence is also featured in order to show different the potential of sexual pleasure in being objectified and dominated. The Feminist Porn Awards annually has been conducting feminist porn competitions in Toronto since 2006 and began to organise annual international feminist porn film festivals in 2017, showing the increasing public attention and popularity for feminist porn. Similarly, queer porn which depicts sexual acts of different genders, sexualities, races, and sexual fetishes has also gained public attention in the last decade. Queer porn film festivals have been organised by LGBTQ organisations in Berlin, London, New York and Rome. They challenge heteronormative sexual practices in order to create alternative platforms for marginalised groups of people who were not represented enough in mainstream pornography. Both feminist porn and queer porn claim to be alternatives to the mainstream pornography and sometimes take a highly political stance against the male-dominated porn industry. During an interview with Erika Lust, a frontrunner of feminist pornography, she told me:

“The focus in my films is also on female pleasure and that’s something that is often overlooked on mainstream sets. At the beginning of my career this focus was the cause of some pushback from within the mainstream industry - they did not want my feminist perspective coming in and changing ‘their porn’. They refused to acknowledge the problems in mainstream porn - the complete disregard for female pleasure, the harmful categorisation and othering of marginalised groups, the gender role stereotyping and so on. I was challenging the male gaze and prioritising female pleasure: this was something scary and new to many people in the mainstream industry and they didn’t like it” (Kodaka 2020:107).

Inspired by Linda Williams’ advocacy (1989) for the inclusion of female voices in the porn industry, Lust challenges the pre-existing conventions of pornography from shooting styles to the depiction of human emotions, which she has emphasised are “lacking from the mainstream pornography” (Lust in Kodaka 2020:108). The significance of such an alternative pornography is that it has broken through the stigma surrounding pornography, especially the perception that it is generally harmful or demeaning to women.

Simultaneously, the emergence of a global #MeToo movement has highlighted the sexual objectification of women beyond the confines of academic discourse. The movement originally stood against sexual crimes such as rape, sexual assaults and sexual harassments, and has had an early victory in the prosecution of former American producer Harvey Weinstein in 2017. There are increasing voices calling for solidarity with various female survivors of sexual crimes via Social Networking Service (SNS). In this movement, there are some voices that make explicit connections between pornography and sexual crimes reminiscent of the *sex wars* of the 1980s and 1990s, which pitched anti-pornography feminists such as Andrea Dworkin and Catherine MacKinnon and pro-pornography feminists such as Gayle Rubin and Nadine Strossen against each other during the second wave of feminism (Duggan and Hunter 1995). Some argue that that pornography is encouraging sexual crimes (Crouse 2018), while others, such as Erika Lust, argue that pornography can contribute to healthier and better relationships.

In Japan, the #MeToo movement has reinvigorated arguments that link pornography to sexual violence. Motoko Rich has written in The New York Times that “rape is often depicted in manga comics and pornography as an extension of sexual gratification, in a culture in which

such material is often an important channel of sex education”¹. Japanese pornography is diverse and has a rich subculture of different sexual fetishisms. One widespread defining feature, is the dynamic of role play between *uke* (passive role) and *seme* (active role) (Mori 2010). Such dynamics are often different from hetero-normative gender roles in Japan and constantly shift according to different narratives. In addition, the key point of this *uke/seme* dynamics is that *uke* discovers his/her sexuality in reaction to *seme*'s active, sometimes aggressive, sexual desire. This also suggests that the Japanese porn industry already has some space for different genders, sexualities, and sexual desires. However, it should be acknowledged that the mainstream porn industry has been male dominated and there has been no dialogue between mainstream and alternative forms of pornography until recently.

In 2008, one of the biggest porn productions in Japan, Soft on Demand (in short SOD), established a new genre for female consumers, *jôsei-muke* AVs (*jôsei* as women, and *muke* is for). Japanese *jôsei-muke* AVs features female friendly pornography which, I would argue, is slightly different from the Euroamerican understanding of feminist and queer pornography. Although *jôsei-muke* AVs stands for the representation of female desire, its origin is purely commercial and not the result of an intervention based on gender politics. SOD was looking for a new market niche, because online streaming services have started to make a dent into the profits of mainstream pornography. *Jôsei-muke* AVs provided a new market and a new group of consumers that could help alleviate the hardship that the industry was facing in the late 2000s. In this respect, the emergence of *jôsei-muke* AVs should be considered differently from the political movement of alternative pornography in Euroamerican countries. However, I would argue that *jôsei-muke* AVs has still made a major contribution to the visualisation of female sexual desire in Japan, where it is still highly stigmatised for women to talk openly about sex.

Remarkably, SILK LABOs' online membership has increased seven times in the last five years, from 10,000 (2012) to 70,000(2017)² and its younger sister company GIRL'S CH has seen 1 million users accessing the website (Taguchi 2018). Note that there were several production companies specialising in female-friendly pornography in Japan such as eS and la Coviluna; however, they have stopped producing new content since the mid 2010s. It is thus

¹ “*She Broke Japan’s Silence on Rape*”, 2017 December 29th, The New York Times. Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/29/world/asia/japan-rape.html?smid=tw-share> [Accessed 17th October 2019].

² “57% no Jôsei ga “Shichô-Keiken Ari”? Jôsei-muke AV Seisaku Genba ni Sennû (57% Women “Have Watched”? Sneaking into Shooting of Jôsei-muke AVs), 2017 April 7th. *Abema Times*. Available at: <https://times.abema.tv/articles/-/2228421> [Accessed 19 April 2022].

fair to say that the genre of *jōsei-muke* AVs is monopolised by SOD. SOD's triumph is arguably the fusion of the production of pornography for women with an idol-like system, in which male porn actors called *eromen* and *lovemen* embrace an approachable boy-next-to-door aesthetic similar to Japanese boy bands.

Heteronormative Desire

Alexandra Hambleton, in her analysis of SILK LABO, has argued that that *jōsei-muke* AV is pandering to normative heterosexual desire, because female sexuality is defined by male presence (2016). As I will analyse the content and context of *jōsei-muke* AVs and the significance of *eromen* and *lovemen* in the following chapters, let me clarify what I understand “heteronormality” to be here. Drawing from Yoshiko's statement above, the emphasis is on a social relationship that can fulfil heterosexual subjectivity for both parties (although Yoshiko's emphasis was on herself).

According to Anthony Giddens (1992), modern romantic love is based on a narrative of liberation and self-realisation through amour passion, in contrast to the premodern notion of marriage as a union of convenience that is associated with family values and financial matters. It is an active participant in the process of individual lives by finding a significant other who makes one's life complete. Romantic love “fastens upon the idealises another, and it projects a course of future development” and “presumes a psychic communication, a meeting of soul which is reparative in character. The other, by being who he or she is, answers a lack which the individual does not even necessarily recognise - until the love relation is initiated. And this lack is directly to do with self identity: in some sense, the flawed individual is made whole.” (Giddens 1992:45). The future development here is often signified as marriage based on *amour passion*. Giddens has argued that romantic love frees women from strings of family, allowing them to pursue their passion, while it also enforces gender stereotypes of two complementary parties in *amour passion*. As Giddens has argued, romantic love is not necessarily associate with marriage anymore. Romantic love or *renai*³ in Japanese is thus often experienced several times in the course of lifetime and thus is a part of self-identification.

Referring to Giddens, Naho Tanimoto (2008) has argued that romantic love is now exercised as “play” (*asobi*) as in the same way as window shopping. That is, to wander around to find someone who perfectly “matches” oneself. Although Tanimoto's research has been undertaken

³ The term was produced as a translation of love during Meiji period (1868-1912). In contrast to pre-existing Japanese terms to signify sexual intimacy such as *iro*, *koi*, *jō*, *renai* was produced to emphasise emotional intimacy rather than physical connection (Yanobu 1982). The term currently is used to refer romantic relationship.

prior to the current popularity of online dating apps such as Tinder and Pairs⁴, it does speak to how the self is commodified in the marketplace of romance. Tanimoto also emphasised the significance of heteronormative gender role in the “play”. That is, women are looking for men who are capable of leading them to a new world, with financial capacity and witty conversation. Men on the other hand, prefer modest and tender-hearted women with good manners and a meek disposition. Both women and men look for emotional connection in their ideal relationship. Searching for someone who perfectly fulfills one’s emotional and sexual desires might not always be incompatible with gender stereotypes.

As a paradigmatic case I will here analyse the example of *Kimi ni Todoke* (trans. From Me to You by Karuho Shiina from 2005 to 2017), a popular *shōjo* manga, a comic genre for teenage women and was adopted for animation and a live action film⁵, that demonstrates such a highly gendered romantic relationship in a high school setting. The main female protagonist, Sawako, is reserved and not getting along with her classmates because her long black hair makes her look like Sadako (the iconic ghost from the film *Ring*). However, owing to the help of her classmate Kazehaya (who later confesses his romantic interest in Sawako), Sawako eventually finds friends and a lover and makes the best of her school life. In contrast to Sawako who has been mocked by her classmates (although she never took it as offense), Kazehaya appears as the most popular boy in school because of his eloquent manner. He is also the only person in the classroom to find gentleness in Sawako and thus defends her from bullies and introduces his friends to her. Despite several obstacles, the romantic relationship of Sawako and Kazehaya has remained steady (at least until Sawako graduates from university and this is where the story ends). What is striking here is that Kazehaya falls in love with Sawako at first sight, because he instantly and intuitively knows her true gentle nature. The story is told from Sawako’s perspective, and she did not have to make any effort to win the love of Kazehaya (Sawako actually rejected his love confession in the first instance). The idea behind such a romantic love story is that women are “found” or “discovered” to be attractive by a good-looking man. This female perspective is directly opposed to the widespread social expectation that men are actively pursuing their love interests and that women only put up passive resistance, if any resistance at all.

This is reminiscent of Yukari Fujimoto’s (1999) analysis on *shōjo* manga. Fujimoto has argued that female subjectivity is defined by male presence and that the everlasting themes of

⁴ Pairs is a popular dating app in Japan which is known for “more serious version” of Tinder.

⁵ The live action film was released in 2010 and was directed by Naoto Kumazawa.

shōjo manga are where or whom to belong to as a woman. Like in the case of Sawako, the conventional “happy ending” in most *shōjo* manga is to be found in a steady relationship with a man and in self-realisation not just as a woman but also as an individual human being with the help of her lover. Romantic love, or *renai*, even though it does not last forever, functions as process of pursuing the significant other as well as a means to assure one’s self-identity. More importantly, as Giddens and Tanimoto have pointed out, romantic love or *renai* is also supported by idealise projection which entails gender stereotypes. This convention is also seen in many *jōsei-muke* AVs as I will demonstrate in the following chapters; it is a crucial component of female heteronormative desire in Japan and beyond.

From the perspective of gender politics, such heteronormality entails many problems. Some might argue that those popular mass media contents reproduce gender roles which restrain female autonomous subjectivity. Others would say that the normalisation of heteronormative desire is excluding the LGBTQ community⁶. While I agree with these criticisms to some degree, I want to emphasise here that for an ethnographic exploration of the fandom, the first priority is to describe the life worlds of the fans and the ways in which they see their desires articulated in media content. To start with a critique in terms of the politics of gender at this stage would simply mean to take Eurocentric categories and to apply them to the Japanese case. In my exploration I hope to develop a critique of *jōsei-muke* AVs that arises out of local Japanese contexts. Japanese feminists have over the years developed robust critiques of the sex industry that are to different degrees inspired by Western feminism. The aim of my inquiry into the meanings of *jōsei-muke* AVs is thus in the first line the ethnographic description of the culture of the fandom and how their consumption of *jōsei-muke* AVs is embedded in their daily lives and how this in turn influences ideas of relationships and romance.

Self-identity and Consumption in Fan Activities, from Otaku to *Oshi-katsu*

Apart from its contents, one of the most important factors of *jōsei-muke* AVs is the fan culture of its male porn actors, *eromen* and *lovemen*. As Yoshiko has indicated, there are many opportunities to interact with them, and these can be highly intimate as some of them work as male escort. While this thesis focuses on how interactions with *eromen* and *lovemen* influences female fans’ understanding of love and intimacy, I want to introduce how the system of “‘idols whom you can meet” functions here.

⁶ It is also worth pointing out here that some of the *eromen* and *lovemen* also perform in gay pornography, both with male and female partners, and that some gay men consume the more explicit SM-themed GIRL’S CH productions.

Japanese pop idols have received much scholarly interests (Aoyagi 2005, Galbraith and Karlin 2012) from the perspective of media and gender, as well as its transnational popularity in relation to Cool Japan⁷. Idols, or *aidoru* is “a word used in Japan to refer to highly produced and promoted singers, models, and media personalities. Idols can be male or female, and tend to be young, or present themselves as such; they appeal to various demographics, and often to broad cross-sections of society” (Galbraith and Karlin 2012:2). Unlike *tarento* (TV personalities) and *owarai geinin* (comedians), the existence of idols is supported by fans. *Tarento* and *owarai geinin* are “sold” by their agencies to TV stations and particular programmes. Idols, on the other hand, do not have specific talents beyond their good looks. They may sing, dance or act, but their value does not lie in their skills, but in the degree to which their existence is relevant to fans. From 1970s onwards, the Japanese entertainment industry has been supported by idols, well-calculated products or *gūzo* (idol or image) that entail specific aesthetics according to different time and demands.

The iconic game changer in the idol industry was Yasushi Akimoto, a record producer, lyricist, and television writer who is best known as a producer of AKB 48. The core idea of Akimoto’s marketing strategy was the concept of the “idols who you can meet”. During the heyday of television in Japan, the relationship between fans and their idols was limited to the small screen. Sensing the audience’s desire to have a more close-up relationship, Akimoto established a theatre in Akihabara, in which idols performed everyday in the very heart of otaku culture in Tokyo. Fans could thus directly interact with idols, allowing a much more intimate emotional connection. Hand-shaking tickets (*akushu-ken*) were included in CDs so the more one purchased, the more opportunities one had to interact with idols. Another important strategy for Akimoto was to transform the aesthetics of female idols from an unattainable standard of beauty to a more “girl-next-to-door” look. Akimoto openly spoke of the aesthetics of AKB 48 as showcasing young girls who challenge themselves to make their dreams come true⁸. The rationale here is that showing the process of young girls growing up to become proper idols stimulates the paternal or maternal instincts of fans. Simultaneously, AKB 48, as its name implies, is known for the large number of its members. This allows fans to find his/her own favorite to “support”. Since its debut in 2006, AKB 48’s singles sales’ have dominated charts in Japan, the so-called AKB *genshō* (AKB phenomenon). Single sales were mostly supported by the fact that many fans purchased multiple CDs to get as many hand-shaking

⁷ See McGray in 2002.

⁸ Akimoto Yasushi, *AKB 48 he no Omoi wo Kataru (Yasushi Akimoto Spoke of AKB48)*, 2012 January 13th. CNN.co.jp. Available at: <https://www.cnn.co.jp/showbiz/300052562.html> [Accessed 19 April 2022].

tickets as possible. The concept “idols who you can meet” spawned many sister groups of AKB 48, such as SKE 48 (based in Sakai, Nagoya), HKT 48 (Hakata in Fukuoka), and JKT 48 (Jakarta in Indonesia). Following to the success of AKB 48, many idol groups were produced in Japan, so much so that the 2010s have been called the *idol sengoku-jidai* (the civil war of idols). This influence has also spread to the AV industry, to female AV stars and gravure idols (glamour idols in men’s magazines), and led to the formation of the AV idol group Ebisu Muscats⁹. Akimoto’s marketing strategy, I would argue, has shaped the current business model not only in the idol industry but also in any line of business that commodifies personalities such as porn actors and live streamers. The technological development of SNS has allowed the relationship between idols and fans to become much more personal, to the degree that idols update or live stream their daily lives online so that fan can directly interact with or financially support their favorites.

The nation-wide popularity of idols has also changed the fan culture surrounding them, or so-called otaku culture. The term otaku has been used since 1980s in relation to Japan’s economic growth and the rise of consumer culture in order to refer those who consume manga, anime, and science fictions and also lack basic social skills. This negative image had emerged as those contents were considered for children and it was nonsense for adults to have a strong interest in them. The negative perception was boosted by the “little girl murder case”, in which the otaku Tsutomu Miyazaki killed four primary school children in 1989. Despite the negative publicity, the consumption of otaku popular culture has been significant in Japan and has been commented upon by many critics, academics and cultural commentators. According to the “data-based model” by Hiroki Azuma (2001), otaku do not consume the grand narratives provided by producers, but rather consume different series of fragmented data. This is a phenomenon in which pre-established values in the original context can be re-read by individual otaku and thus reinterpreted into different contexts. Similarly, Galbraith has defined otaku as “attracted to the fictional contexts of images in and of themselves” (2012:187) in the nexus of capitalistic consumer society. In other words, otaku culture itself is a means for self-expression through consumption.

In the last 20 years, the word otaku has shaken of its negative image as otaku culture and its terms, such as *oshi* (to support) and *moe* (the feeling of strong affection) have become popularised among Japanese youths, at least since *Densha Otoko* (Train Man) in 2005 which

⁹ Ebisu is a district in Shibuya, Tokyo and Muscats comes from a TV show *Onegai! Muscats* (Please! Muscats) which features female AV stars.

depicts a boy-meets-girl romantic love story between an otaku and a beautiful woman¹⁰. Simultaneously, otaku culture has changed from gathering data to sharing interests through the intervention of SNS (Okura in Iida 2021). People these days share their own interests online and “support” each other’s favourites together, which is known as *oshi-katsu*, meaning “supporting activity”. *Oshi* is the noun for *osu* (to support) and signifies “a favourite” while *katsu* denotes an activity. In contrast to the previous image of otaku as a single man who is isolating himself socially, *oshi-katsu* has a more positive ring in current media discourses. Especially during the time of the Covid-19 crisis, *oshi-katsu* gained popular attention as a means for self-realisation in order to escape from the harshness of everyday lives, such as loneliness, isolation and the lack of communication (NHK January 18th)¹¹.

The 164th Akutagawa award¹²-winning novel, *Oshi, Moyu* (trans. Oshi, Burns 2020 by Rin Usami), for instance, has contributed to the popularisation of the word *oshi-katsu*¹³ by depicting a high school girl whose life is centering around supporting *oshi*. The protagonist thinks of “*oshi* as my backbone” (Usami 2020:37), and story illustrates how *oshi* can be worth devoting a life for.

Oshi-katsu, I argue here, represents an extension of the idol business model into everyday life and relationships. It is a means to find one favourite among many; the supporting activity itself is a form of identity formation. Yoshiko’s constant investment in her favourite *eromen* and *lovelorn* is, I argue, also a part of her self-realisation. Self-realisation here may suggest a Western idea of personality development that consists of increasing the autonomy of the individual self. Such ideas were imported to Japan during the Meiji period (Hirai 1979) and have become part of a language of both self-help and business manuals. Simultaneously, the term *shōnin-yokkyū* (literally “desire for recognition”) has recently become a popular Japanese word especially in relation to the use of SNS. According to a psychiatrist Tamaki Saitōh (2016), *shōnin-yokkyū* is fundamentally resulted from existential crisis and now is sometimes considered as the most important thing to achieve in life. Referring to Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, Saitōh has argued that desire for self-actualisation (*shōnin-yokkyū*) that was the last needs of human being has been replaced to the first as the self is defined by the other. I will thus employ theory of recognition of Axel Honneth (1995) and Charles Taylor (1994) as both

¹⁰ The story was based on a series of anonymous posts on *ni channel*, a Bullet Board System (BBS).

¹¹ *Oshi koso Waga Jinsei (Oshi is My Life)*, 2022 January 18th, NHK News. Available at: <https://www3.nhk.or.jp/news/html/20220118/k10013434781000.html> [Accessed 20 April 2022].

¹² The literally award presented biannually for a new talent and its name was a tribute to Ryūnosuke Akutagawa (1892-1927) who is referred to as the father of Japanese short story. The award is considered as one of the most prestigious one in Japanese literary world.

¹³ The word *oshi-katsu* has been nominated for the most popular word (*ryūkō-go*) of the year in 2021.

conceive recognition is a basis of the self; rather than just a desire. While Yoshiko gives primacy to her own wishes, the pleasure she derives from the interactions with her favorites has its source in the favorite's recognition of her contribution, as we shall see. The main concern of this thesis is thus the interactive system between idols (*eromen* and *lovemen*) and female fans, and how it influences female fans' understanding love, intimacy, and romantic relationship.

Anthropology of Media

In order to address female fans' practice of *oshi-katsu* with male porn actors in *jōsei-muke* AVs, my approach is based on an ethnographic analysis of audiences, a method developed in the discipline of anthropology of media. Stephen Hughes (2011) exclusively described the term, anthropology of media as a study of the social practices of and surrounding media; differentiating it from anthropologists' focus on media production in ethnographic films. Anthropology of media, as Hughes has noted, emerged in 1990s from anthropological interests in increasing diverse media practices, for instance so-called new media such as internet-related forms of communications. Mass media practice – such as audience receptions – has been discussed in cultural studies and media studies. Anthropology of media has thus been influenced by these pioneering studies and developed an ethnography-based tool kit “to investigate *how people actually argue, construct, and contest the media worlds in which they live and why they do or do not matter*” (Hughes 2011:311).

By ethnography, I refer to Tim Ingold's definition of “‘philosophy with the people in’: an enterprise energized by the tension between speculative inquiry into what *life* could be like and a knowledge, rooted in practical experience, of what life *is* like for people of particular times and places” (Ingold 1992:696, also in 2014:393). With an emphasis on “lived” (ibid.) experience of participants, Ingold also insists that ethnographers should remember that “we are there to work with them, not to make studies *of* them” (2014:391). Ethnographic knowledge production is thus driven by meeting people, listening to their stories, and watching what they do from their perspectives as much as possible. As an early career ethnographer, I myself was fascinated by Ingold's understanding of ethnography. Inheriting this ethos, I have thus tried to maintain an attitude of humility towards my research participants/informants on practical levels.

At this point I have to briefly sketch my own positionality. As a woman, born and raised in Japan I could describe myself as a native anthropologist (Narayan 1993). I was, however, a complete outsider to the world of fandom, and despite my fluency in Japanese, I was not

familiar with the language and behavioral conventions in fan communities. My first entry into SOD was arranged by e-mails with Eri Makino, who works for SILK LABO and who has welcomed my interviews and my long-term presence at fan events with exceeding kindness. I have later found out that Makino had already accommodated academic researchers in the past (Hambleton 2016 and Iijima 2015). The issue, however, was that my experience at SOD was limited compared to previous research. A vague indication of their frustration with feminists' critiques to their products, for instance the statement that "women are not in control over male bodies" in SILK LABO productions, suggested to me that especially Makino was more interested in an exploration of what women really wanted from their products. As Makino believed that their job is to provide what their female fans demand, my focus shifted naturally to female fans in order to examine their expectations and motivations for consumption of SOD's fantasy. I have often struggled during fieldwork with my informants' view on gender and sexuality, as my own critical views were shaped by my learning about gender in British universities and I felt a keen mismatch between mine and their attitudes. While it was difficult for me to voice my own position, especially at the early stages of research when I was working hard to build trust with my participants, I have as far as possible inserted myself into the conversations, not in order to criticise their statements but to show my own *lived* experience in the field.

Chapter Overview

The way I articulate my argument here has been influenced by many unexpected events that happened during my year-long fieldwork. My initial research aim was to explore *jōsei-muke* AVs and its female audience. However, it has become apparent that *oshi-katsu* is an important aspect of fan activity as stated above. Simultaneously, the in-depth conversations with interlocutors has shaped my own view of the phenomenon surrounding *oshi-katsu* of *eromen* and *lovemen*, as well as its related businesses in the *jōsei-muke* adult industry. The thesis will thus examine *jōsei-muke* AVs and female fans of *eromen* and *lovemen* in the following manner.

The first two chapters will be devoted to providing the background of my research by focusing on the current state of porn studies and the methodological issues around anthropological research into sex and pornography. Chapter 3 and 4 will give the a more holistic picture of the Japanese AV industry and the emergence of *jōsei-muke* AVs with a series of interviews of those who engage in the industry. Chapter 5 and 6 will examine female fans based on ethnographic descriptions of SOD's organised events as well as interviews with female fans. I will thus demonstrate how female fans "act-out" their desire from life story of

the main interlocutors in Chapter 7. Ultimately, Chapter 8 will conceptualise the system of *oshi-katsu* and its commodified recognition from the perspective of its socioeconomical impact.

To begin with, I will examine the pre-existing literature on pornography in order to understand the current controversy surrounding pornography. By juxtaposing Euromerican and Japanese critiques, I will examine how pornography has been discussed in history, film studies, cultural studies, and gender studies. Although Japanese pornography can be understood as a cultural particularism, western influence especially since the late 19th century on Japanese academics should not be ignored when it comes to the study of sex and gender in general. In addition to that, the continuing arguments about pornography in Japan often refer to the *sex wars* in Western academia and beyond as a starting point. *Sex wars* here refers to Euromerican feminists' debate during 1980s on pornography, especially on whether it is demeaning to women or not. Note that the definition of pornography I employ here is that of Linda Williams' definition of cinematic hard-core pornography as an extension of voyeuristic activity that seeks the "truth" of sex. With its association of marketisation, the current mainstream cinematic pornography can be understood as a genre of mass media content (Paasonen 2011). As discussed above, female friendly pornography has inherited from Williams's advocacy (1989) to include the female gaze. Simultaneously, the launch of *Porn Studies* as a discipline (and a journal) has shifted the argument on pornography away from simply arguing for or against it to considering pornography as cultural material that has to be studied from different scholarly perspectives.

In regards to the Japanese case, I will start with the argument on pornography has long been associated with the idea of obscenity with the emergence with *sei hyōgen*, or "sexual expression", in other words, depictions of sexual activities of more than one individual. Under the name of freedom of expression, film makers took *sei hyōgen* as a metaphor of political and social struggles in the post-war era, which also brought commercial success of pornographic films, the so-called *pink films*. Many film studies' scholars argued about its artistic aesthetics in relation to the development of Japanese film industry (Desser 1988, Standish 2011, Sharp 2009, Domenig 2007, and Zahlten 2017). Simultaneously, feminists' discussions around pornography in Japan has concerned *sei hyōgen*, or more broadly commodification of sex, a discourse which partially inherited the ethos of Euromerican feminists' *sex wars*. There have been civic debates between those who claim *sei hyōgen* as demeaning to women and those who protect freedom of expression. Another debate is on commodification of sex which signifies not only commodification of sexual intercourse or other sexual services but also performance of sex in pornography. I will examine Yumiko Ehara's two edited volumes (1992 and 1995)

which presents critical arguments regarding the commodification of sex with a special focus on the autonomous will of sex workers, structural gender inequality and the nature of commodification per se. Such points will be crucial to consider the notion of commodified recognition in this research.

From a different perspective, pornography has been also discussed in relation to emotional and bodily identification (Akagawa 1996, Morioka 2013, Fujimoto 1999, Hori 2009, Mori 2010, Ortega-Brena 2009, and Shigematsu 1999). I would thus like to address the discussion of Japanese pornographic manga in relation to female reader's self-identification with male homosexual romance, known for *yaoi*, or Boys Love (Mori 2010 and Hori 2009). It is often said that women "read" pornography in contrast to men "watch" it, due to the dearth of products or the difficulty of accessing AVs for women. Those analyses broke ground by acknowledging female sexual desire; but their work needs to be updated in light of the emergence and popularity of pornography such as *jōsei-muke* AVs.

The next chapter discusses the methodological challenges of studying "audience" of pornography. This includes my own positionality and reflexivity as a researcher in the field, which is a crucial issue to be addressed in anthropological studies. The problem of audience studies of pornography lies in the difficulty of finding informants, as it is a highly private matter and especially female consumption of pornography is often highly stigmatised. Some respectable researches have been conducted consumption of pornography (Tzankova 2015 and Wong and Yau's 2014, Alilunas 2014, and Nornes 2014). While these suggests that consumption of pornography is not only about "viewing" content but also a means to stimulate sexual excitement alone or with partners, the audience – in the sense of an "active audience" – appears hard to find in pornography. I will thus examine traditions of mass media effect, audience reception studies in cultural studies, and anthropology of media in order to discuss how to study the relationship between mass media and people. In order to understand the specific relationship between mass media and people, I will employ the framework of fan studies by Henry Jenkins (1999). This is because *jōsei-muke* AVs is supported by self-identified fans who are not just audiences of specific materials; rather, being a fan is a large part of social identity. My research therefore is based on such physical or virtual fan community of *jōsei-muke* AVs, as it emerged surrounding male porn actors as stated above.

In order to access the fan community of *jōsei-muke* AVs, my existence in the field has inevitably become an issue. The main field site was Tokyo where I myself have grown up and, in this sense, I might be categorised as a "native anthropologist". Although my subtle advantage of a native speaker of Japanese as well as a Tokyo local, I was new to the fan community of

jōsei-muke AVs and had never been involved in the AV industry. Following Narayan's argument (1993), I saw there was no difference in anthropologists' original or cultural backgrounds. Rather, my understanding of "nativeness" is as series of commitments and the empirical understanding of a specific culture that results from these commitments. This "nativeness" thus gave me a nuanced framework to absorb anything that would happen in the field. There are however always new and unexpected events in the field, as in any kind of knowledge production system. In regards to the issue of researchers' reflexivity in the field, I have found that studying the purported "other" inevitably functions as a mirror for the researcher in the crucial methods in anthropology, especially "participant observation". In other words, the relationship between the researcher/researched is inter-influential as we *live* in the field. Simultaneously, the erotic subjectivity of the researcher also has to be taken into consideration (Kulick and Willson 1995). As my research subject was related to sexual matters, there were some unpleasant comments from those whom I have encountered not only in the field but also in academia. This ranged from sexist comments to the suspicion that I must be especially interested in sex. It is crucial to discuss gendered issues in the field work by educating and supporting each other in and out academia.

As Chapter 1 and 2 are dedicated to backgrounds of my research, I will discuss *jōsei-muke* AVs, departing with an overview of the AV industry in Chapter 3. For better or worse, Japanese AVs is popular across the world, topping the most searched term in Pornhub's *2021 Year in Review* (14th December 2021)¹⁴, and this despite the fact that genitals are vaguely censored with pixelisation. Erika Lust, on her trip to Japan in 2018, has told me that Japanese AV industry is so self-contained so that it is difficult for a new business to join. At its zenith, the market size of the AV industry was estimated 400 to 500 billion JPY¹⁵ around 2000s (Nakamura 2015), which speaks of its economic significance to Japanese society. The AV industry, however has been declining due to the current popularity of online streaming website, so called Porn 2.0, in which people can watch and upload different contents for free. *Jōsei-muke* AVs has emerged precisely at this moment in the industry. In order to understand the background of its emergence, I will discuss the historical development of the AV industry, accompanying a series of interviews with those who engage in the AV industry in the past and the present. The term "adult video" is coupled with its original form of VHS decks that has

¹⁴ 2021 Year in Review, 2021 December 4th. *Pornhub Insights*. Available at <https://www.pornhub.com/insights/yir-2021> [Accessed 19 April 2022].

¹⁵ 2 to 3 billion GBP (1GBP=160JPY).

been emerged during 1980s. In contrast to pre-existing theatre-based display of pornographic films, the VHS decks allow private consumptions.

The characteristic of AVs is thus more intimate and episodic, focussing on a more documentary style of sex scenes, rather than juxtaposing sex scenes into narratives as in the case of *pink films*. Simultaneously, the history of AVs is aligned with depictions of *honban-koui*, unsimulated sex, or, more straightforwardly, real penile-genital penetration and broader social concern for illicit activities such as forced and non-consensual labour, and recruitment of underaged girls, exemplified by the outrageous malicious criminal cases in 2004. Academic and civic interests since then have led to a wider examination of the problem of human rights and trafficking in the AV industry. This resulted in the implementation of new regulation law in 2022 to protect withdrawal rights of AV actors. It is important to emphasise here that my research subject, SOD, is one of those major production companies which have been organising their business with integrity.

The most important part of Adult Videos is the actors. Their profiles are strictly hierarchical according to their popularity, as well as how much they are willing to perform for different fetish genres. Under highly neoliberal working conditions, some actors achieve international success while the majority of them are working in underpaid conditions (Nakamura 2012). This is also because of the saturation of female AV actors in the industry, mostly women seeking a high income for hours worked, as well as the decline of the industry due to the popularity of “Porn 2.0” (Jenkins 2007). A big company such as SOD therefore has decided to move beyond contents and began to turn their AV actors into idols, following to Akimoto’s idol business model above. *Jōsei-muke* AVs has emerged in such a desperate atmosphere in the industry, in order to expand its market to female audiences.

The launch of *jōsei-muke* AVs in SOD was led by Eri Makino, a producer of SILK LABO. As a young female employee working in the marketing section at SOD, Makino saw the potential of female demand for AVs when collaborating with a with sex toy shops. Later, Makino was tasked by the company to conduct research on female voices regarding the mainstream AVs (here I mean pre-existing AVs for men) to find out what kind of AVs would be suitable for female audiences. The opinions she collected demanded a more narrative-oriented style which allowed simulations for “how a couple ends up with making love” and good-looking male AV actors, which contrasts with the overly macho male AV actors in the mainstream. The initial titles of SILK LABO were thus suggestive of educational instructions for “comfortable sex”, as Makino’s survey showed that many women experienced difficulties with orgasm and felt uncomfortable during sex with their male partners. Simultaneously, warm

lighting and background music were also predominantly featured in order to create a cinematic atmosphere for emotional identification, differentiating from the mainstream AVs, which focused on documentary styled sex scenes. Later, following to the success of SILK LABO, SOD has launched GIRL'S CH in 2013 an online streaming site with pornography aimed at female viewers. The content was initially cuts and edits from SOD's pre-existing pornography that was considered suitable for a female audience. GIRL'S CH soon became successful with one million users accessing the website each month, and within the last couple of years, Taguchi Momoko has started to produce for female consumers who sought to watch more explicit versions of SILK LABO, such as BDSM (bondage, domination, sadomasochism) scenes. The main contribution of GIRL'S CH was to establish a new genre of "submissive men", in which boy-band lookalikes are treated as sexual objects for female pleasure. From a series of interview with Makino and Fukase, an assistant producer of SILK LABO, and Momoko Taguchi, a producer of GIRL'S CH, Chapter 4 will thus discuss how *jōsei-muke* AVs are different from the mainstream AVs, focusing on its narrative conventions and the significance of its male porn actors, *eromen* and *lovemen*. As stated above, titles that are popular among women are inheriting the ethos of pre-existing romantic love, or *renai* ideology, which is explained by Makino as she considers SILK LABO films to be explicit versions of romantic love dramas in television, in the sense that a female protagonist finds emotional and sexual pleasure through a male counterpart. And such fantasy, for which I employ Purcell's definition (2012) of a material phenomenon where psychological needs and social needs met, does not only exist on screen but is also commodified at fan meeting events, including as private "dating" experience with *eromen* and *lovemen* as a part of the idol business. Female fans are provided with multiple opportunities to interact with their *oshi*, or favourites. The questions arise, then, how female fans engage in their *oshi-katsu*, and what their expectations for interaction with *eromen* and *lovemen* – which could be highly intimate – are.

Chapter 5 will explore female fans' expectations and motivation to attend fan meeting events of *eromen* and *lovemen*, based on participant observations of a specific fan event of SOD, accompanying a series of interviews with female fans. From the conversation with them, it has become clear that female fans often interact with each other as well as their *oshi*, or a favorite on Twitter. The anonymous nature of Twitter is significant, since it allows female fans to compose their own online personas, separating them from their everyday-ness at work and family. This results from the stigmatisation of women who want to talk about ex openly despite social taboos surrounding the topic. In this sense, the event space itself is a confined realm, which SOD has artificially created in order to provide a safe space for women to enjoy their

sexual desire. The separation from everyday-ness is evident as female fans call each other with their Twitter accounts' names and the conversations about private matter such as work and families are avoided, due to a fear of being discovered by their families and colleagues. Employing Washida's theory of face (*kao-ron*, 1998), I will argue that the social identity of fans is in a dialogue with other fans and would be changed according to different social settings. Such a confined realm enables the *virtuality* of Kapferer's definition (2004), an on-going reality that exists parallel to other realities.

The main motivation for female fans to enter such *virtuality* is to escape from the harshness of everyday life and to restore their femininity through interaction with *eromen* and *lovemen*. As the heteronormative fantasy requires male presence, I will argue that what is bought and exchanged at these events is recognition, referring to the theory of Honneth's (1995) and Taylor's (1994). Both Honneth and Taylor have emphasised that the importance of recognition as a condition for a fully achieved subjectivity and "good life", as social life is intersubjective. Although both Honneth and Taylor did not define what the "good life" is, in the particular context of *jōsei-muke* AVs, I would suggest that the "good life" for women is to achieve male attention. Recognition from *eromen* and *lovemen* here in this particular discourse which appears in *jōsei-muke* media is a staged "performance". This means, unlike Honneth and Taylor who have conceived of recognition as a macro-phenomenon that pervades society, performative recognition is happening along a power differential, and is not as reciprocal phenomenon. This is because the exchange of recognition between fans and *eromen* and *lovemen* appears reciprocal, but their motivation of giving and receiving recognition is different. For fans, it is to enjoy their fantasy to fulfil self-realisation, while for *eromen* and *lovemen* it is about earning money and fame. I will thus call this phenomenon "commodified recognition".

Following this, I will examine female fans' consumptions of *jōsei-muke* AVs in relation to the sex positive discourse that many in the *jōsei-muke* industry espouse. Packaging *jōsei-muke* together with other services, SOD has collaborated with sex toy shops and *jōsei-muke fūzoku* shops, escort services for women. In the past five years the numbers of *jōsei-muke fūzoku* offering erotic massage services for a female clientele has been increasing due to the rise of women's average income as well as the rate of unmarried women, which results in higher mental stress among women (Hara 2018). SOD had recruited male escorts for *eromen* and *lovemen* and also produced a *jōsei-muke fūzoku* shop, studio CH (which has closed in 2022) so that female fans can have the experience of an embodied version of the fantasy depicted in *jōsei-muke* AVs. "Women enjoying sex" is almost like a mantra which has been repeated by those who encourage female consumption of adult products and services. It is also associated

with the idea of relaxation, or *iyashi*, as male escorts are labelled “therapists”, the same way in which sex toys for women are showcased as a part of cosmetics or a beauty salon experience. My question here will be how female fans react to those discourses of “women enjoying sex” in their way of consumption.

Through in-depth ethnographic description of the SOD’s *Ikemen* Festival in 2019, an exhibition of the *jōsei-muke* adult industry at the SOD office building in Nakano, with a series of interview of those who have attended the event, I will discuss the lack of articulation between sex positive attitudes and female fans’ consumption of service and products of the *jōsei-muke* adult industry. The increasingly louder voices that demand female sexual emancipation actually attempt to de-masculinise the idea of sex with an emphasis on “comfortable sex” and the acknowledgement of female self-pleasure, which also resonates with a part of SILK LABO’s initial project. However, the interviews with my interlocutors will demonstrate their indifference to such a discourse as the majority of them believe that female emotional and sexual pleasure should be led by men and their purpose of *oshi-katsu* is to enjoy the fantasy which *eromen* and *lovemen* embodies. In other words, female fans’ consumption of *jōsei-muke* adult industry is not only associated with bodily identification, but it is also an important factor in gaining recognition of femininity through interaction with their *oshi*. Those who understand such female fans’ demands seduce their clients and ask for constant consumption as an exchange of their intimacy. This marketing strategy is known as *irokoi eigyō*, “‘sensuous love trade’, a commodified romantic relationship” (Takeyama 2016:87). *Irokoi eigyō* is a strategy to seduce female clients emotionally not only during the service, but also beyond the service into their private realms, for instance through direct messages and private dates. Such a system of commodified romantic relationships might be the rationale when considering making profits, but it is potentially exploitive and directly contradicts the idea of female sexual emancipation. My argument here will be that the formalistic approach in sex industry – to simple reverse the subject of the gaze from men to women – has to be followed by consideration of pre-existing gender issues.

In Chapter 7, I will discuss the moral career of female fans in order to examine how they “act out” their desires with stories of my three interlocutors, for the sake of understanding how their view of romance and intimacy have changed in the nexus of this confined fan community. A moral career, as Goffman’s defines it (1961), is a sequence of changes that happens in the self during the course of experiences in a confined institution. I will consider *jōsei-muke* adult industry as a confined system which consists of commercial relationships/recognition. Three interlocutors, Yuri, Yoshiko and Arisa are self-identified fans of *eromen* and *lovemen* whom I

have spent a lot of time with during my fieldwork. What is common among Yuri, Yoshiko and Arisa is their long-term consumption of *jōsei-muke* products. Goffman (1961) has also spoken of how the construction of the self is shaped by the environment and the people surrounding the subject. I will thus argue that my interlocutors have shaped their views of romance and intimacy according to the confined system of commercial relationship/recognition infused with their own projections of relationships. In other words, they seek for their ideal relationship or version of the self through consumption, that is, as I have argued above, a romantic love relationship or/and male attention. The stories of Yuri and Yoshiko will demonstrate how they “desire to believe” in romantic relationship with their favorite male escorts, while paying to meet them. And the case of Arisa will show how she persistently followed her desire for recognition of her femininity, by eventually becoming a sex worker to fund her life as a regular customer at a host club. By drawing from the importance of sincerity in rituals (Seligman et al 2008), I will argue that their “desire to believe” is driven from their hope that their feeling is coherent to themselves, even though they know that relationships in such a confined system are elusive.

The final chapter ultimately will conceptualise such commodified recognition from its socioeconomic perspectives. By commodified recognition, I will argue that what is being purchased and consumed is intimacy or *iyashi* and this economic transaction is transformed into recognition for consumers. This is because winning the affection of *oshi*, or favourites is not the purpose of the clientele; rather engaging in *oshi-katsu*, or supporting activity is itself a means to fulfil self-realisation. While received literature (Takeyama 2016, Richard and Rudnycky 2009) has provided a methodological framework to analyse the contemporary economy in relation to “affect” as a “mode of action upon action” (Richard and Rudnycky 2009:62) for self-realisation in a free market system, my concern here is how such an economic system influences our sociocultural life. While the consumption of recognition frees fans from the unpaid work of emotional labour and the commitments of non-commodified recognition, the issue here is that commodified recognition is only achieved by long-term financial investment. Simultaneously, the nature of *oshi-katsu*, the “supporting” aspect has no end point in the social relations with *oshi* (for instance, winning his love). It also signifies that pleasure for pleasure’s sake does not produce any meaningful social relations, in the sense of a mutual give and take. Taking the example of Arisa who was a university student when I first met her and later became a female escort in order to pay off a huge debt at a host club and was subsequently hospitalised for severe depression, I will employ the notion of structural vulnerability (Quesada et al 2011) as a crucial aspect of the free market system of commodified

recognition. The chapter will end with the necessity for an ethical consideration of the system of *oshi-katsu*.

Chapter 1 Literature review

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to illustrate the development of pornography and how it has been discussed by academics, both in Euromerican and Japanese contexts before conceptualising *jōsei-muke* AVs, the main topic of this thesis. Simultaneously, I believe it is important to clarify the current climate surrounding pornography as the discussion of pornography has been a controversial subject not only in academia but also in the public more broadly. This is arguably because of its depiction of sexual intercourse which – from the point of view of social respectability – ought to be a hidden activity. Previous research has, however, shed light on the discussion of pornography from historical, legal, gender, art, economic, psychological, and sociocultural perspectives in order to deeply understand its significance.

This chapter is divided into two sections: first, it will discuss the development of a critical literature on in the Euromerican context, followed by a similar discussion applied to the Japanese literature. The reason for such a classification comes from the fact that I myself sympathise with porn studies which emerged from the strident anti- or pro-pornography controversy and declares pornography to be a social and cultural phenomenon to be studied in its own right. Simultaneously, many scholars associated with Japanese pornography, despite of their original contributions, are aware of how pornography has been discussed in Euromerican academia and sometimes intertwines with them. It is also important to acknowledge that the very first modern, or cinematic pornography in Japan has emerged from democratisation or so-called Americanisation during the post-war period. I therefore believe that Japanese pornography and its academic discussion have not developed on their own, but have always been influenced by the discussion abroad, perhaps parallel to other cultural materials.

The section of this chapter therefore will begin with the historical development of pornography by addressing the difficulty of providing a definition. Secondly, I will discuss the historical development of Euromerican feminists' debate on pornography, focusing on cinematic hardcore pornography. To understand hardcore pornography, I will employ Linda Williams' definition as an extension of voyeuristic study of sexuality; *scientia sexualis* in Foucault's term. Recording of sexual activities became a mode of production of knowledge of "truth" of sex. The section will then discuss how cinematic hardcore pornography, male dominated underground culture, has caught public attention in relation to the *Golden Age of*

Porn in the US when some pornographic films became worldwide success. In reaction to the *Golden Age*, the second wave feminists criticised/supported pornography during the *sex wars*. By pointing out the limits and difficulties of the generalisation of pornography which pro-pornography feminists during *sex wars* often have done, the section will focus on the recent academic trend of studying pornography as “texts, productions or performances; as occurring in various kinds of ‘spaces’ with various significances; subject to various kinds of legal and other regulatory frameworks and with different importance for its participants and for observers of those participants”(Attwood and Smith 2014:5). In addition to that, it is important to recognise changes in the porn industry that have been brought by the recent technological development. In the last two decades, the way pornography is produced, distributed, and consumed has changed dramatically. Studying pornography with the social and cultural dynamics; porn studies thus is relatively new and still has a lot of disciplinary challenges.

The latter part of this chapter will look at how pornography has been discussed in Japanese academia by starting a brief introduction of historical development of pornography since the post-war. Note that Japan, often known for its pre-modern erotic art *shunga*, had a certain idea of eroticism and depicted sexuality which was different from Euromerican ones. However, it should be emphasised that assuming a direct connection between pre-modern erotic art and contemporary Japanese pornography is problematic and unhelpful, as this erotic art has been banned after the Meiji restoration 150 years ago. At that time, Japan eagerly absorbed Euromerican systems in politics, military, education, infrastructures, and moral values under the discourse of westernisation. In addition to that, post-WW II Japan, which was occupied by US military, was forced to change its political and ideological systems, including mass media representations. It would therefore be unwise to start the discussion of pornography in Japan as inherited from a “unique” indigenous idea of love and sex which often appeared in *shunga*, although I have to admit that the degree of acceptance of erotic material might be relatively higher in Japan compared to Euromerican countries.

I would like to then start by looking at the post-war Japanese films that celebrated the freedom of expression. Many films depicting youth sexuality became commercially successful. This was followed by those who contributed to Japanese New Wave film movement and they used sexual expression (*sei hyōgen*) as a challenge to the idea of obscenity under the name of freedom of expression in Japanese films in association with the censorship and civic rating system. The commercial success of *sei hyōgen* led to the emergence of *pink films* that mainly consisted of sex scenes, and its popularity eventually topped over the major film studios in Japan. Many film scholars tended to look at those films with *sei hyōgen* with a semantic

approach (Desser 1988, Standish 2011, Sharp 2009, Domenig 2007, and Zahlten 2017). But the emergence of AVs in the late 1980s has move academic discussion to its effects as the watching of *sei hyōgen* shifted from theatre to private rooms (Akagawa 1996).

In what follows, I will examine the Japanese *sex wars*, the feminists' debates on *sei hyōgen*, or, more broadly, the commodification of sex. The two main pillars of feminists' concern are whether any kind of *sei hyōgen* – even though it might be humiliating to women – should be accepted to uphold freedom of expression; and the question of where the commodification of sex in general is positioned within the larger gender system of Japanese society. In regards to the first, anti-pornographic representation movement has emerged from feminists' civic activities of *Kōdōsuru Onna-tachi no Kai* (Association of Women in Action) in 1975 established as celebration of Women's Year. By defining pornographic representation as gender unequal expressions which influence mass consciousness and reproduce gender inequality, the association challenged those who claimed freedom of expression, which in turn was a result of the anti-authoritarian post-war ethos. Such women's voices provoked discussions on gender and self-regulation for gender equal expression in mass media and has eventually won the support of the Cabinet Office. However, the conflict between those who problematise *sei hyōgen* and those who seek to protect freedom of expression has been an ongoing issue up to the present day.

The other important issue among feminists is the debate on commodification of sex. By its definition, commodification of sex signifies not only commodification of sexual intercourse as prostitution but also includes sexual services apart from intercourse – as in the case of Japanese sex shops¹⁶ – and commodifying contents of sexual intercourse in pornography. Two articles on commodification of sex published in Yuriko Ehara's edited volume in 1992 by Daizaburō Hashizume and Kaku Sechiyama provoked feminists' discussions, as the first argued for the autonomous will of sex workers in a market society, while the latter distinguished “good” commodification of sex from “bad” ones and argued only the “bad” commodification was to be abolished. The “bad” here, according to Sechiyama signifies exploitation of human rights while the “good” commodification of sex underlies in autonomous wills of sex workers. These two articles received many critiques – as in the way that many respectable articles do –, which has triggered a rich discussion among Japanese academics. In the second volume of Ehara's

¹⁶ Penile-vaginal penetration is illegal to sell in Japan, according to Prostitution Preservation Law, although prostitution is organised secretly as *jīyu renai* (free love); consensual romantic relationship between a sex worker and a customer in specific areas which register as restaurants (Tobita-shinchi in Osaka) and bathhouse (Yoshiwara in Tokyo). However, most shops offer sexual services that includes “foreplay” as oral sex and hand jobs.

edited book (1995), Eriko Nagata challenged Hashizume's argument by claiming that sex should be an affair within private realm, and that this was a prior to individual choice. Chie Asano and Tomoko Kawabata, on the other hand, criticized the ambiguity of distinction between autonomous wills and structural gender inequality. Manabu Akagawa and Shinya Tateiwa criticised Sechiyama's distinction of "good" and "bad" commodification of sex, by arguing the term is too broad and different sex works should be considered in details. These perspectives are crucial to this research for looking at women's consumption of commodification of sex.

Finally, the section will look at the functions of pornography as a masturbatory tool – or in other words carnal resonance: "[r]esonance encompasses the emotional/cognitive as well as the sensory/affective and, in fact, points to the considerable effort involved in separating the two" (Paasonen 2011:17) – which has been discussed in connection with how it influences male understanding of sexuality (Akagawa 1996, Morioka 2013). This is the inevitable result of the fact that cinematic pornography has been predominantly produced for men. In regards to female version of porn consumption, I will look at *yaoi*, or Boys Love (in short, BL) comics that depicts homosocial and homosexual romantic relationships. Akiko Hori (2009) has analysed how men and women identify with characters in different pornographic comics. Simultaneously, Naoko Mori (2010) has analysed female consumption of pornographic comics in relation to female masturbation. Mori has described the way female readers choose a good pornographic comic as follows: "whether there is a scene which women can use as a masturbatory tool or whether it is realistic so that women can relate themselves to protagonists" (2010:122). They argue that women "read" pornography in contrast to men, who "watch" it. Nonetheless, the arguments of Mori and Hori need to be updated due to the emergence and popularity of SILK LABO, a production company of female friendly pornography operated by female producers.

Pornography as Vehicle of Satire

The definition of pornography remains both culturally and historically ambiguous. What counts as pornography for one person, might not do so for another. Its forms vary from visual, audio, print, to written materials and sometimes foods. Several academics highlight the difficulty of defining what pornography is (Hunt 1993, Kendrik 1996, and Paasonen 2011). The idea of pornography travels through time and space, often accompanied with the idea of obscenity. It is used for pleasure, entertainment, education, and sometimes to illustrate political points.

Classic literature such as *L'Ecole des filles* (The School of Venus: or the Ladies Delight) by Michel Miliot (1680 in Kendrick 1996) for instance, depicted the anatomical explanation of both male and female pleasure by suggesting sexual exploration outside the confines of marriage.

The word pornography appeared the Oxford English dictionary in 1909 as “the expression or suggestion of obscene or unchaste subjects in literature or art” (Attwood 2018:39). Andrea Dworkin, an iconic figure of anti-pornography feminism, argued that “[t]he words pornography, derived from the ancient Greek *porne* and *graphos*, means ‘writing about whores’”. *Porne* means ‘whore’, specifically and exclusively the lowest class of whore, which in ancient Greece was the brothel slut available to all male citizens” (1989:221). Dworkin ignores, however, that while Greek in origin, the word was coined in the Victorian era due to the rediscovery of sexually explicit artifacts from the Graeco-Roman world, which only wealthy and educated men had access to (Rubin 1993). Thus, to make a direct connection between prostitution and pornography is misleading and historically inaccurate. Rather, the issue here is what the word pornography connotes in different social and cultural contexts.

Pornography has existed in print culture as a vehicle to criticise political and religious authorities in early modern Europe (Hunt 1993:11). Looking at the other side of the world, Japanese *shunga* is a genre of sexually explicit paintings which was very popular among Japanese people during the Edo period (1603-1868) regardless of gender and social classes. *Shunga* was originally derived from both Chinese traditions which celebrated sex as origin of the universe and Japanese idea indigenous of sex as something pleasurable (Ishigami 2015). *Shunga* is also known as *warai-e* (humorous pictures) because many depictions of sexual intercourse had a comical element and often used to satirise the Shogun’s government during the Edo period. It is thus fair to argue that pornography has been rooted in premodern mass culture, both in Europe and Japan.

Walter Kendrick (1996) has argued that pornography became a public issue of obscenity due to the technology of mass publication during the 19th century in Europe. Simultaneously, the Meiji government in Japan, which was strongly influenced by England and Germany at that time, started to ban *shunga* because it was inappropriate for a “modernised nation”, thus aligning the idea of obscenity with the pre-modern world.

Is Pornography Obscene or Art?

The very first pornographic film has emerged from the late 1900s.¹⁷ Those early pornographic films, known as *stag films* were produced anonymously and exhibited in brothels, which indicates an exclusively male-dominated market. Such a male gaze on the female body and pleasure is captured as *scientia sexualis* by Michal Foucault, while Linda Williams (1989) draw a connection to the way *stag films* were consumed by men. Williams has pointed out, that “a cinematic hardcore emerges more from this *scientia sexualis* and its construction of new forms of body knowledge than from ancient traditions of erotic art” (Williams 1989:36). Those *stag films* had been an illegal underground cultural phenomenon, and it took until the late 1960s for cinematic pornography to catch the public’s attention.

In 1969, Denmark became the first country to deregulate all pornographic materials for people above the age of 15 due to its illegal market saturation and the constant challenge to the limit of the freedom of speech by producers (Ydersbond 2012:8). This deregulation immediately spread across first world countries and pornography started to appear in mainstream culture. The films such as *Deep Throat* (1972 Damiano Bryanston Pictures), *Behind the Green Door* (1972 Mitchell Mitchell Brothers Film Group) and *The Devil in Miss Jones* (1973 Damiano VCX Ltd) became internationally successful, and became icons of what was described as *the Golden Age of Porn* (Paasone, Nikunen and Saarenmaa 2007, Purcell 2012). Simultaneously, Lehman (2006) has argued that *Blue Movie* (1969 Andy Warhol Films) by Andy Warhol could be described as the seminal moment of *the Golden Age*, which blurred the line between pornography and art. Compared to the previous *stag films* that were short and only exhibited in exclusive areas such as peep show houses, those films were feature-length, and had cinematic narratives and were screened in public theatres. In 1973, *The New York Times* called this phenomenon *Porn Chic*, remarking that pornography appeared and achieved public attention in the mainstream culture as fashionable. Despite this, the definition of obscenity was first legally determined in *Miller vs. California* (1973) in the US as:

“the [pornographic] work depicts or describes, in a patently offensive way, sexual conduct specifically defined by the applicable state law, and the work, taken as a whole, lacks serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value”¹⁸.

¹⁷ According to Linda Williams (1989), those early films were illegally produced and distributed and have no copyrights. Collections are stored in the Kinsey Institute of Indiana University in US.

¹⁸ *Miller v. California*, 413 U.S. 15. (1973), Justia US Supreme Court. Available at: <https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/413/15/> [Accessed 19 April 2022].

Porn producers thus had to defend themselves with possible artistic values. But the movement towards a pornography as art declined due to the popularity of VHS in the early 1980s. Nonetheless, the outrageous impact which *the Golden Age* brought to the wider public in and outside of the United States was significant, and eventually led feminists' attentions to pornography. Despite of the controversial question whether it is obscene or art, I will consider the current form of pornography as a linear development of those cinematic forms and define pornography as a media market genre, drawing from Paasonen's stand point as a media scholar (2011).

Sex Wars

Debates regarding sex, sexuality, pornography and sexual activities among the second wave feminists from the 1980s to early 1990s were often known as *sex wars*, as described by Duggan and Hunter (2006). Much of these have been shaped by assumptions about the negative effects of pornography: that pornography commodifies female bodies and that pornography leads to rape and other sexual crimes. The warring sides have been entrenched along the dichotomy between anti-pornography and pro-pornography or anti-censorship arguments.

In her book *Pornography: Men Possessing Women* (1989), the radical feminist Andrea Dworkin analysed how pornography dehumanised women through the depiction of a male-dominated system by defining the word pornography as "the graphic depiction of the lowest whores" (1989: 222). Dworkin also argued that in a patriarchal system woman were whores so that the depiction of pornography was real and objective. At the same time, Catharine MacKinnon, a feminist lawyer, also argued that pornography encouraged male aggression towards women (1993). Dworkin and MacKinnon proposed the *Anti-Pornography Civil Rights Ordinance* in 1983 to seek prohibition of pornography on the grounds of discrimination against women (Dworkin and MacKinnon 1988). Dworkin and MacKinnon argued that women who were demeaned by pornographic representation had to have the right to prosecute porn producers, directors, distributors, and exhibitors for sexual discrimination. This ordinance eventually was rejected by courts due to the violation of freedom of speech. The problem is the ambiguity of Dworkin and MacKinnon's definition of pornography, which makes any legal act difficult in general. Moreover, images of objectified women are not only found in pornography but also in magazines, advertisement, TV commercials, almost everywhere. It is therefore difficult to argue that the prohibition of pornography would lead the deconstruction of patriarchal society.

Supporting the general gist of Dworkin's work, Diana Russell has defined pornography "as material that combines sex and/or the exposure of genitals with abuse or degradation in a manner that appears to endorse, condone, or encourage such behavior" (1993:2-3) and proposed a potential causal model of pornography and rape. The causal model was based on quantitative interviews with male university student in the US conducted by Briere and Malamuth, which showed 60% of male students stated they would rape or use force to have sex with women if they would not be punished and assured that no one knew (1983 in Russell 1988). Russell did not conclude that there was a direct causal relationship between pornography and rape; but she assumed a certain pornography which explicitly depicted violence against women was one of the main factors of rape and other violent sexual crimes. In contrast to this, the psychologist Lynne Segal (1993) strongly criticised the direct causal relationship between pornography and sexual crimes. Segal has argued that even though pornography might depict aggressive sex, its effect is depended on the context and interpretations of those who watch it and to the degree to which they let it inform their "real" sexual practice. To support Segal's argumentation, Barnard William's suggested in the *Williams Report* in 1979, that the Committee on Obscenity and Film Censorship in the UK should consider the relationship between pornography and sexual crimes. William (1981) has stated that pornography has to be prohibited only when the violation of specific people occurred through the process of production, distribution, and exhibition, for example, in the case of sexual abuse of children under sixteen years old. Besides, William also has pointed towards the multiplicity of meanings of pornography and the difficulty of agreeing on an objective definition; as such, it would never be possible to regulate pornography by the law.

In contrast to the anti-pornography feminists, academics such as Nadine Strossen and Gayle Rubin provided a more positive, different perspective. In *Defending Pornography Free Speech, Sex, and the Fight for Women's Rights* (1995), Strossen argued that any censorship of pornography could lead to more oppression of women. According to Strossen, there was a contradiction in the anti-pornography arguments by feminists such as Dworkin. The regulation of pornography by censorship was often claimed by groups of people who emphasised traditional ethics, family values and religious beliefs which Dworkin criticised as a male-dominated system. Strossen, on the other hand, suggested that pornography could empower women and encourage an understanding of different sexualities in society. Similarly, the anthropologist Gayle Robin strongly criticised anti-pornography feminists. Rubin (1993) pointed to the contradiction of anti-pornography feminists such as Dworkin and MacKinnon because their protest against pornography echoed with the argument of religious conservatives

which oppressed women's rights. Rubin wrote, "[t]he right has already adopted feminist anti-porn rhetoric, concepts and language, conveniently stripped of its already marginal progressive contents" (1993:39). In addition to that, the politics of anti-pornography feminists could endanger women in the sex industry because they stigmatise pornography. Certainly, the abuse of women in sex industry should not be justified in any sense. However, sex workers rights' have to be protected when they choose their job as free choice. As well as that, pornography can be a tool for empowering sexual minority people by representing them for them, by them.

Despite the different perspectives of anti or pro, feminists' *sex wars* have shown the untenability of pornography as a simple category. For instance, the debate on whether the content of pornography is violent or not is exceedingly complex and depends not only on the production or the genre (such as BDSM which stands for role plays of bondage, domination, sadism, and masochism), but also on the way it is interpreted. Moreover, those who contributed to the *sex wars* also interpreted and analysed pornography from different political viewpoints. As Rubin argued, "feminism's critique of gender hierarchy must be incorporated into a radical theory of sex, and the critique of sexual oppression should enrich feminism. But an autonomous theory and politics specific to sexuality must be developed" (1999:170). After that, academic interest has shifted from the anti/pro dichotomy towards considering pornography as a cultural phenomenon.

Porn Studies: Beyond the Nexus of Pro and Contra

Film scholar Linda Williams' book *Hardcore: Power, Pleasure and the "Frenzy of the Visible"* (1989) was outstanding because of Williams' work moved away from *sex wars* by looking at pornography as a cultural resource. Williams analysed the development of cinematic hard-core pornography in relation to Foucault's term *scientia sexualis*. Williams acknowledged that the early cinematic pornography was an expansion of the study of sex and had been problematising the female body and pleasure; however, she also concluded that pornographic representation had been expanded to include the female gaze. In this sense, it could be argued that Williams mediated between anti- and pro debates.

Simultaneously, Pamela Church Gibson's edited collection *Dirty Looks: Women, Pornography and Power* (1993), written from an anti-censorship perspective, has provided a media and cultural studies approach to the study of pornography as cultural material, that is, as part of the visual ecology of the modern world, just like other lowbrow products such as pulp fiction or Britney Spears. However, it does not mean that the debate on pornography has

reached an agreement between feminists. Pornography remains a moving target because of constant innovation and technological changes.

Then, so-called cinematic theatre-based pornography was making way for VHS, DVD, and online pornography. Getting access to pornographic online sites became much easier due to tube sites such as *xvideos*, *Pornhub*, and *xHamster* where people can stream pornographic videos without member registration (unless they want to upload their own videos). These online sites are known as Porn 2.0, with reference to Web 2.0, which signifies the predominance of user-generated content website (Jenkins 2007). Such ubiquity of pornographic imagery has led some critics to argue that we live in a “pornified culture” (Dines 2010). Especially children are understood to be the target of sexualisation, a process that negatively shapes their future relationship to sex and pleasure. Contrary to this, Attwood has convincingly argued that “[s]exualisation is better understood as describing the ways that sex has become particularly visible – onscene – in Western countries, and the sexualisation debate is part of this process itself.” (2018: 81). On/scene is a word play with obscene which literally signifies off from the public. On/scene culture here also represents the contemporary milieu where pornographic materials become largely accessible to a broader public.

As people can upload pornographic videos on those sites, there are increasingly new issues such as piracy, the illegal uses of media contents and amateur non-consensual porn such as revenge porn. Regulatory systems of individual countries cannot be applied when the server is outside of the country. At the same time, there are concerns for non-consensual pornographic contents as anyone can upload on Porn 2.0 websites. Revenge porn is non-consensual pornographic materials of individuals, which is often distributed by ex-partners for the sake of “revenge” for separation or refusal. Intimate sexy photos or video sharing in or even before a relationship often described as “sexting” (Branch et al 2017:129), is widespread because of the spread of mobile or smartphones. Revenge can have a traumatising effect for victims and sometimes affects them mentally in the same way as sexual assault does (Bates 2017). Although a bill to criminalise revenge porn was introduced recently (Linkous 2014, Bates 2017), the whole debate showed a particular sexual double standard between men and women. Certainly, there are male victims of revenge porn; however, young girls are paid more attention to as victims (Bates 2017, Branch et al 2017), which often leads to the issues of media literacy and sex education for younger generations (Waites 2005, Attwood 2018). However, those issues are not limited to the younger generations, although young people are often the targets of moral panics of sexualisation (Duchinsky 2013, Ringrose and Renold 2012). Nonetheless, the Internet-associated technological changes enabled people to engage with pornographic

materials more easily and intensively, which has drawn recent scholarly interest. Sex has become more and more visible in cyber society. New technology associated with porn and sex have been introduced on an annual basis¹⁹.

Concerning the visibility of pornography in mass media, Gail Dines (2010) has argued that the spread of porn culture is manipulating our own sexuality, which might lead to a public health issue. Although Dines is coming from an anti-porn perspective, her concern for the saturation of culture with pornographic materials should not be ignored as an old-fashioned radical opinion. Dines does not claim that we should prohibit pornography, rather she gives a warning about the over-celebration for the liberation of pornography, which pro-pornography feminists often are engaged in. In addition to that, Karen Boyle's edited collection, *Everyday Pornography* (2010) has contributed to the argument of pornography from wider political and economic perspectives by taking an anti-pornography perspective as a premise. Boyle is fully aware of the contradictions and difficulty among previous anti-pornography feminists. For instance, widespread hardcore heterosexual pornography tends to focus on the male orgasm, which implies a gendered power differential and a particular sexual politics. On the other hand, there are female users who actually enjoy these hardcore scenes for their own sake. Therefore, pornography remains ambivalent and can be studied from multiple disciplines. This is how porn studies as an academic discipline started to emerge.

Fifteen years after her first book, Linda Williams' edited book, *Porn Studies* (2004) demonstrated the potential of feminists' analyses of pornography from various perspectives such as gender, sexuality, race, class, age etc. Williams in the introduction argued that "*Porn Studies* differ from previous anthologies about pornography – including those that purport to legitimise its academic study – in its effort to take pornography seriously as an increasingly on/scene cultural form" (2004:5). Yet some critics such as Boyle (2010) were not satisfied with Williams' work due to the lack of concern regarding the practical applications of pornography, for instance on consumption. Nonetheless, Williams' attempt to establish porn studies as an inclusive academic subject by assembling different interests related to pornography was crucial. This ethos was inherited by Fiona Attwood and Clarissa Smith, the editors of *Porn Studies Journal* since 2014. The Journal *Porn Studies* has been a platform for scholars who write about pornography regardless of their disciplines. Bearing Boyle's criticism of Williams in mind, porn studies embraces the history of pornography, analysis of the circulation of production and

¹⁹ 4 Such as Web Cams, VR porn, iTunes of Blowjob (*Sexual Experiences with Porn Stars or your Neighbour*, 2016 November 14th, CamSoda.com. Available at: <https://promos.camsoda.com/labs/blowcast/> [Accessed 19 April 2022]), and smart sex toys which synchronise with pornography (Brown 2018).

consumption, the significance of pornography for particular users, practical usage, relations with contemporary culture, and anything about pornography as it is (Attwood and Smith 2014). However, the launch of *Porn Studies* was not celebrated by everyone. Gail Dines denounced Attwood and Smith after the announcement of the journal launch as pro-pornography feminists and criticised the journal for over-celebrating the porn industry, implying an indifference to the violence that certain pornography might entail (Dines in Cadwalladr 2013). But Attwood and Smith do not close the possibility of a critical discussion of pornography in contemporary society. There are clearly misunderstandings between them, addressing some of which will be the next challenge for scholars who are willing to contribute to porn studies. Besides, there are increasing attempts for outside academia to produce alternative pornography in relation to the rise of awareness of LGBTQ rights. Porn studies as an academic discipline is growing and shedding lights on essential parts of humanity. Furthermore, the chapter will discuss academic discussions of pornographic materials in Japan, with a particular focus on its development as cinema aesthetics, feminists' debates on freedom of expression and commodification of sex, and its (carnal and emotional) effects on consumers.

Semiotic Analysis of Sexual Expression (*sei hyōgen*) in the Post-war Japan

The academic discussion of pornography in Japan has not taken any similar steps parallel to the rise of porn studies in Euromerican contexts. As discussed, the expression of sexuality (*sei hyōgen*) has been widely considered to be a key issue in study of Japanese film in relation to its socio-political implications. Japanese post-war film studies consisted mostly of semiotic analysis of those depictions of *sei hyōgen* in relation to sociocultural struggles of the post-war Japan.

The Japanese New Wave film movement from the late 1950s to 1970s, while it was a new journey for cinema photographic aesthetics, also remained linked with the development of *sei hyōgen*. David Desser's *Eros plus Massacre* (1988) was the first English book dedicated to the study of Japanese New Wave film movement, in which Desser argued that the ideological background of the movement was connected to the post-war tragic experience which had brought the loss of hope among Japanese intellectuals such as Ango Sakaguchi. Sakaguchi, in his essay *Discourse on Decadence* (*Daraku-ron* 1986), blamed the Japanese militaristic totalitarian regime during the war-time which constrained Japanese people with a strict ideology. In order to overcome this traumatic past, Sakaguchi emphasised the importance of individual autonomy (*shutaisei*). According to Standish (2011), this concept of *shutaisei* was

promoted in popular culture, especially films through romance, desire and consumerism as seen in the films such as *Season of the Sun* (Taiyou no Kisetsu 1956 Furukawa, Nikkatsu). But as Standish argued, it only put an emphasis on Japanese *shutaisei* in the sense of a westernised or Americanised concept and ignored social and political realities in Japan. As a counter discourse to this *shutaisei*, film makers such as Nagisa Oshima, Yasuzo Masumura and Susumu Hani produced films in order to depict the post-war struggles of Japanese society. Oshima's *Cruel Story of Youth* (Seishun Zankoku Monogatari, Shochiku 1960) illustrated a tragic boy-meets-girl story amid post-war poverty, with sexual violence, gamble, illicit abortion, and juvenile suicides. The film was a huge commercial success and was considered as the beginning of the *Shochiku Nouvelle Vague*, due to its similarity with the French New Wave film movement at that time. While it was not intended to be pornographic (as in simply arousing and gratifying sexual needs), those film of New Wave often thematised sex and violence which were undoubtedly provocative at that time and the main factor of their popularity. Directors amid this New Wave movement often used sex and violence in order to depict the post-war sociocultural struggles in Japan especially in relation to US military force (Desser 1986, Standish 2011).

Simultaneously, a new genre of film *pink film*, that features *sei hyōgen*, emerged with the release of *Flesh Market* (Nikutai no Shijō, Ōkura, directed by Satoru Kobayashi 1962). The word *pink film* was named after the colour pink, which “suggested the rosy flush of sensuality that the works strove to provoke, which is strongly sensed in the Japanese word for the color *momo-iro*, meaning quite literally, peach-colored” (Sharp 53: 2008). While the Japanese film industry at that time was monopolised by five major big studios, Shochiku, Daiei, Nikkatsu, Toei, and Toho, *pink films* were produced by smaller independent studios with lower budgets and fewer equipment, and most importantly distributed in its own independent cinemas. The significance of *pink film* was that it resonated with youth protest culture of 1960s (Standish 2011, Zahlten 2017), which the post-war Japanese society often captured by its struggle under strong US influence; Ampo Tōsō or the campaign against the Japan-US Security Treaty²⁰ mobilised not only youth but also leftist intellectuals. While major films by those five big studios were produced by elite salary men and their depictions were apolitical, *pink films* were highly political and often produced by drop-outs and misfits. Koji Wakamatsu, for instance, often known as one of the greatest *pink film* directors, was a former yakuza and his motivation

²⁰ the Japan-US Security Treaty allows US military camps in Japan (which is still diplomatic issue between Japan and US) for the sake of protecting far east amid the cold war. This contradicts with the constitution which never allows Japan to participate any war.

was driven from anger against the police and an anti-authoritarian attitude. Wakamatsu's work *Secrets Behind the Wall* (Kabe no naka no jōji, Wakamatsu production 1965) depicts a love affair of a young housewife with her student protest comrade who was a nuclear bomb survivor, which juxtaposed post-war politics with the explicit love affair. Despite the film's nuanced narrative composition, it was labelled "public enemy" by Japanese mass media (Domenig 2007) due to its focus on sex. In the same year of 1965, the film *Kuroi Yuki* (Black Snow Nikkatsu)²¹ directed by Tetsuji Takechi became sensational and prosecuted for obscenity for the depiction of the brothel next to US base camp; however, Takechi was found innocent due to "unintentional obscenity" of the film, as discussed before. As Japanese film scholar, Isolde Standish stated:

"In all cases, through discourses on sexual transgression, criminality and terrorists acts against the State, there is a desire to overcome the narratives of history being institutionalise through the major studios in complicity with the post-war conservatism of the American global hegemony into with ruling Japanese Liberal Democratic Party had inserted itself" (2011: 155)

In other words, *pink film* corresponds with anti-authoritarian, anti-globalism, and anti-capitalism discourse, which was ingrained among youth culture at that time. However, this rebellious cultural integration did not last long as the popularity of *pink film*, or it must be said, the popularity of *sei hyōgen* taking on a life of its own. Alexander Zahlten (2017) also noted that the majority of audiences in *pink film* cinema were students and white-colour salarymen, not angry politicised students and blue-colour workers that often featured in *pink film* narratives. For those audiences, *pink film* therefore may have served as escapism. By the end of the 1960s, the popularity of *pink film* occupied a vast amount of the film market; which eventually threatened major five studios. Those major studios (apart from Toei²²) thus began to produce *pink films*. These commercially minded productions of *pink films* dismissed the socio-political inclinations and foregrounded *sei hyōgen*. While the film critic Naofumi Higuchi (2009) argued this had broadened the possibility of expression in films because sex was always associated with human instinct, there was a dynamic industrial shift in *pink film* from interspersing *sei*

²¹ The film itself was produced and distributed by Nikkatsu, not an independent studio. This means that the film was exhibited in major cinema, the exposure of such film in public was sensational. Therefore, it was prosecuted for obscenity.

²² Toei has a family-friendly reputation as exemplified by the success of *Godzilla* series (1954 onwards).

hyōgen in critical political sentiment to more direct, and entertainment-oriented ones. This is not to say that *pink films* have lost their aesthetics. As previously analysed (Sharp 2008, Zahlten 2017), some *pink films* were epic and made a significant mark in the history of Japanese film. But by the 1980s, the commercially produced *pink films* had lost their transgressive appeal. The new emergence of AVs in the beginning of 1980s contributed to the shift from a semiotic approach to pornography to of so-called “effect” theory and reception studies.

Japanese “*Sex Wars*”: Debates on Gender Inequality and Freedom of Expression

Pornographic representation, or *sei hyōgen* has been widely discussed not only in academia but also in public, especially in relation to increasing attention paid to gender inequality. In the Japanese context, these debates often centre around 1) anti/pro pornography, discussing sexual discrimination against women versus those who strongly defend freedom of expression, and 2) considering pornography as a part of commodification of sex and questioning its correspondences within Japanese society. Inheriting the ethos of *Sex Wars*, Japanese scholars and intellectuals have deepened discussions around pornography in Japan. This particular section will look at the first point.

Anti-pornography feminists’ movement had begun with the establishment of *Kōdōsuru Onna-tachi no Kai* (Association of Women in Action) in 1975, when International Women’s Year was announced by UN at the same year²³. The main purpose was to advocate inequality such as gendered division of labour and mass media which reinforce gender stereotypes. According to the statement in 1990, *Kōdōsuru Onna-tachi no Kai* defined pornography as something that “percolates into our everyday lives and manipulates our sexual consciousness. There is neither kindness nor tenderness in communication, it is only a wasteland of sex. How women are portrayed there? Seen, manipulated, humiliated, and objectified as sexual things – we call it pornography” (1990:2). Echoing with Dworkin and MacKinnon’s idea of pornography, *Kōdōsuru Onna-tachi no Kai* has considered pornography as a cultural vehicle that carries gender inequality and the regulation of pornography was equivalent to female emancipation in patriarchal society. Note that female figures – nude or swimwear models – were common in mass media at that time, even in public places such as trains and street advertisement, until the major enterprises have begun to implement self-regulatory systems since 2000s onwards. One of the main activities of *Kōdōsuru Onna-tachi no Kai* thus was to criticise gender-stereotypical depictions in media, sending inquiries to corporations regarding

²³ The Association was dismissed in 1996.

the intentions of media creators. A nation-wide tabloid paper, *Shūkan Post* attacked *Kōdōsuru Onna-tachi no Kai* for violating freedom of expression, calling them “angry eccentric women” (*Kōdōsuru Onna-tachi no Kai* 1990: 134).

For those who prioritise freedom of expression, any protest against a certain expression ignores various perspectives and supports authoritarian intervention in mass media production and content. This is especially salient when one considers the historical context of *sei hyōgen* in Japan, that has evolved with the anti-authoritarian ethos, resonating with youth culture in the post-war time. There have been several trials regarding obscenity versus art between police authority and artists. In the trial of *In the Realm of Senses* (Ai no Korida 1976 Nagisa Oshima, Argos Films). The film was not prosecuted due to the fact it was heavily censored, as films were literally cut into half. It was the promotional book which contained film frames that was prosecuted for obscenity. In the three year-long trial, the defendant Oshima emphasised the freedom of the receiver/audience in order to argue that the idea of obscenity depended on each individual so that there was no definitive measure to define obscenity. Oshima was found innocent as the court held up the argument that it is impossible to objectively define obscenity (Gerow 2000). Defending freedom of expression thus became a main weapon for those who criticised feminists’ protests against pornographic representation. One of the main advocates of freedom of expression, the jurist Yasuhiro Okudaira (1986) has accused social activist groups – although he did not clarify but the implication was “a certain women’s group” (1986:123) – of violating freedom of expression, concerning a certain group inviting authoritarian control over mass media. Simultaneously, Okudaira has argued that there are male figures in pornography which could be an object of female sexual desire and thus there must be female audiences who actually enjoy pornography, while admitting male superiority in those representations. Okudaira then agreed with the *Williams Report* of 1979 and argued that zoning – a clear separation between those who want to watch porn and those who do not – was an important factor in order to protect freedom of expression and welfare of underaged.

Responding Okudaira’s defence of freedom of expression²⁴, *Kōdōsuru Onna-tachi no Kai* (1990) has explained that they are not against *sei hyōgen*, but are criticising a certain *sei hyōgen* (which I believe what they call “pornography”) that dehumanises women as objects of sexual desire. They also wrote in the letter, “[w]e are not asking for any regulation that suppresses free speech. However, it is our legitimate activity to speak up against any mass media that

²⁴ The inquiry letter was sent to Okudaira by Nanae Sakamoto and Yoshiko Hasegawa, a media group of *Kōdōsuru Onna-tachi no Kai* (1990:212).

encourages gender inequality” (1990:213). In return, Okudaira showed sympathy of civic activities that challenged the patriarchal system in mass media (*Kōdōsuru Onna-tachi no Kai* 1990).

Masako Kamiya (1995), a jurist who has carefully analysed the whole debate of anti-pornography versus freedom of expression, criticised both standpoints and suggested a minimum of government’s intervention in freedom of expression. According to Kamiya, Dworkin and MacKinnon’s definition of pornography as demeaning to women is still vague and even if the regulation – as proposed in *Anti-Pornography Civil Rights Ordinance* in 1983 – was implemented, it would end up as a form of legal paternalism and contradicts the feminists’ challenge to patriarchal society. Kamiya’s criticism of anti-pornography feminists thus has a lot in common with that of Strossen and Rubin. On the other hand, Kamiya’s objection to freedom of expression is that it should be limited if it proves to be harmful to certain groups of people. Note that Kamiya considers the idea of “public welfare” as a legal term already as paternalistic, as it protects traditional family values. When the mantra of “freedom of expression” is constantly shouted by certain intellectuals who are opposed to gender inequality, it falls to grassroot feminist activism to address the wider complicity of the gender system.

Since *Danjō Kyōdō Sankaku no Shiten kara no Kouteki Kouhoū no Tebiki* (Instruction of Public Advertisement from Gender Equality) has been published by Gender Equality Bureau at Cabinet Office in 2003, local public organisations and public media are encouraged to implement self-regulations for gender equality and not to employ female figures as “eye catcher” (2003:6). I argue that such “encouragement” has a similar ethos with a minimum government’s intervention in freedom of expression that Kamiya’s advocates for. However, the debates on pornographic expression remains a live issue. From a recent event when the Japanese Red Cross Society released advertisement collaborated with a manga, *Uzaki-chan wa Asobitai* in 2020, its representation of female character, *Uzaki-chan* became a target of public debates. As *Uzaki-chan*’s breasts were emphasised with a provocative smile on her face, feminists criticised it as inappropriate for public health advertisement. On the other hand, supporting opinions were wide-ranging such as “emphasising a certain body part is normal in anime or manga” and “it is discrimination against women who have big breasts”. The promotion campaign was initially aimed for male otaku attending at Comic Market²⁵, but the

²⁵ Merchandises of collaborated manga/anime characters are given to donors at the event. According to Daisaku Nakata, a blood donation promoter of Comic Market, the numbers of first-time donor raised up to 47% from 2.5% in eight years since the campaign started. In “‘Komike 97’ ‘Uzaki-chan Kenketsu Poster’ Enjō wa Kanchigai ga Hottan?” (“Comic Market 97” Flaming “Uzaki-chan’s Blood Donation Advertisement” is a

advertisement however was criticised as environmental sexual harassment for its exhibition at Shinjuku station.

Considering Kamiya's points above, I would argue that the issue here is how to draw a line in terms of public welfare protection between those who want to see and those who don't. Furthermore, the more fundamental problem that poses itself here is that in order to judge whether one wants to see a particular kind of image, one has to be exposed to it in the first place. Similar to the discussion of zoning, mass media employing female figures as an eye catcher should be limited to a certain focus group. Public places such as stations should be safe and comfortable space for anyone. Simultaneously, it is worth challenging gendered stereotypes – despite what seems to be an everlasting fight – in order to change public consciousness for a more egalitarian vision of society. The next section will demonstrate how the arguments on pornography has been emerged in relation to human rights.

On Commodification of Sex

Another essential feminists' debates on pornography is its association with commodification of sex. By taking performance in pornography as labour, the arguments fell into between those who claimed it is exploitation of women and those who are against such a view, arguing bodily integrity of sex workers. To clarify, I will employ the definition of commodification of sex given by Yumiko Ehara (1992) as “not only just ‘involving sexual intercourse with unspecified numbers of people in exchange of receiving or promised to receive compensations’ (the definition of prostitution given in Prostitution Prevention Law), it also includes conducting sexual services apart from intercourse in exchange of compensations, and commodifying contents which aims to induce sexual excitement by showcasing female bodies or sexual intercourses” (1992:268).

The key incident in the AV industry – in a sense of prompting public discussions on pornography – was when Baksheesh Yamashita, an AV director released a series, *Nyohan* (Female Criminal) from 1990. An unknown female actor was raped by multiple men with her screaming and crying hard in the video. Despite of desperate begging, she was raped by a man after a man until she got stunned. The video was accused by women's organisations of its too “realistic” violent rape scene and believed to be fraud. Later, Yamashita, on his own defence, revealed that there was informed consent with a female actor regarding the contents of the

product of misunderstanding?), 2019 December 31, *Oricon News*. Available at: <https://www.oricon.co.jp/special/54149/>. [Accessed 21 December 2022].

video, however, male actors were not informed anything but to be told to rape the female actor (Motohashi 2016). *Nyohan* series were celebrated among some intellectuals, such as Shinji Miyadai and Yukiko Hayami (1997) for female actors' "realistic performance" as progressive. Considering male actors were not "performing" in the video, ethics and integrity of *Nyohan* is questionable. The series then encouraged discussions on pornographic contents and (female) AV workers' rights.

In 1992, two chapters dedicated to the argument of commodification of sex were included in Yumiko Ehara's edited volume of *Feminism no Shuchō* (Statements of Feminism). With a provocative title of *Baishun no Doko ga Warui* (What is wrong with Prostitution?), Daizaburo Hashizume (1992) has argued that the immorality of commodification of sex is a sociocultural prejudice as it is outside of pre-existing traditional family value. From a historical analysis of prostitution in Japan, Hashizume has also claimed that female sex workers choose the job themselves on a basis of autonomous wills. In other words, there is no possible counter arguments against the commodification of sex in market society. Kaku Sechiyama (1992), on the other hand, has attempted to distinguish "good" commodification of sex and "bad" commodification of sex and argued that feminists should only challenge to the latter. In the same way with Hashizume, Sechiyama also supported sex workers' autonomous wills and has discussed that suppression of sexuality echo with patriarchal family values and ignores sexual minorities, similar to Rubin's critique of Dworkin and MacKinnon (1993). In this regard, "good" commodification of sex according to Sechiyama – while admitting impossibility of a singular definition – starts with multiple possibilities of sexuality which are comfortable for both parties.

Hashizume and Sechiyama departed from objection to the argument of anti-commodification of sex, and both defended freedom of job for sex workers. Informed consent in sex work is undoubtedly crucial, and forced labour and sexual exploitation should never be allowed. Which I believe both Hashizume and Sechiyama also stand with this perspective. However, commodification of sex is more complicated than individual choice. Despite of increasing popularity of adult services for women, commodification of sex as labour is still highly gendered; in many cases, women are providers while men are consumers. Furthermore, it is worth questioning of the nature of commodification which will be elaborated in the following chapters (esp. Chapter 8).

As a reaction to Hashizume and Sechiyama, the second edited volume of Ehara's *Feminism no Shuchō* in 1995 were dedicated to discussions of commodification of sex. In a stark contrast to Hashizume's argument, Eriko Nagata has claimed that commodification of sex is immoral, as sex (here I understand as explicit *sei hyōgen*) should be performed within private domain.

Sex moral is, as Nagata claims, not an individual choice but a shared value. The discussion of which to prioritise either an individual choice (Hasizume) or a shared value (Nagata) is complicated and also brings points that question autonomous wills and internalised heteronormative discourse. From an example of eating disorder, Chie Asano (1995) has analysed how commodification of sex is internalised in female bodies. By interviewing female patients, Asano has claimed that slim bodies signify not an object of sexual attack in the same way as glamor bodies but still conveys gendered stereotypes of weakness and delicacy. Losing weight in this sense appears as individual choice, however, it is reinforced by social structure. Similarly, Tomoko Kawabata (1995) also emphasised the significance of gender in discussion of dichotomy between individual choice and social structure. In order to appeal men, women are autonomously commodifying themselves not just only in sex work but in heterosexual matrix.

From a slightly different perspective, Manabu Akagawa and Shinya Tateiwa (1995) has problematised Sechiyama's definition of "good" and "bad" commodification of sex. Akagawa's critique of Sechiyama was that issues around commodification of sex does not stand in a simple dichotomy between "good" and "bad", however, questions whether sexuality is equivalent to personality, in the same way with Foucault's *sexualisation*. In other words, the argument on commodification of sex should start with asking, what is exactly commodified, bought, and exchanged in monetary transaction; is it service or human being? Akagawa and Tateiwa conceives possibility of the first and argues the latter would convey a certain discourse that sex should come with intimacy. Tateiwa, from a slightly different perspective, has challenged to commodification of sex by arguing that it blurs perceptions of commodity and the incommensurable as sex is a part of being. This point, however, needs in-depth consideration, as both Akagawa and Tateiwa noted, because commodification of sex is still broad term and varied such as sex work, pornography, and gender representation and it is important to examine each cases by cases.

This section has thus summarised respectable rich debates on commodification of sex among Japanese academics. Agreeing with Akagawa and Tateiwa's emphasis on in-depth analysis of different cases of commodification of sex, it also has to be noted that sex work, pornography, and gender representation do not exist on its own but correspond with each other. Especially my research subject, *eromen* and *lovemen* work not only as porn actor but also idols and some of them engage in intimate sexual services targeting women. My contribution thus here will be bringing the perspectives of female fans in order to examine how commodification of sex is

received by consumers and influences in their idea of gender and sexuality. Followingly, I will look at issues around bodily identifications of pornography.

Pornography as Masturbatory Tool

The argument about the effect of pornographic material on the viewers centers around the consumption of pornography as a means of masturbation. The 1980s saw the emergence of AVs which became popular due to the spread of home-based video deck and replaced *pink film* as the predominant vehicle of pornography. This signifies that the consumption of pornographic contents shifted from public places such as the cinema to the private realm which inevitably facilitated masturbation. Simultaneously, Adult Video, the current mainstream term to denote Japanese pornography more broadly, strategically designed and produced mockumentary styles due to low-budgets and the absence of expensive shooting techniques, as opposed to studio-produced *pink films* (see more in Chapter 3). Given this new form of pornography which aids private masturbation, the question has also shifted to how it does affect understanding of gender and sexuality.

A sociologist specialising in the study of masturbation, Manabu Akagawa (1996) has defined the *AV Onanie Kūkan* (masturbatory space of AV) as a form of male consumption of AVs as a means of masturbation or sex instruction in a very private room. The relationship between AVs and male masturbation has mutually reinforced certain principles in the depiction of gender and sex in AVs. The new shooting style, especially point of views (POV), in which an actor performs while holding a camera to locate viewers directly in the scene, is designed to stimulate and simulate participatory male sexual desire. Simultaneously, the focus of camera angle in AVs often centers on a young good-looking woman and anonymises the male actor's persona. The principle of AV representation therefore has been organised around female "*to-be-looked-at-ness*" (Mulvey 1975: 62) by the male gaze. Although this does not necessarily exclude the possibility of female viewers (of course there are always female viewers of AVs), it is undeniable that those principles of AV representation were designed for male desire. The relationship between pornography and viewers' bodies is explained by Paasonen as carnal resonance which "conceptualises online porn as a nexus of generic conventions, technologies, body styles, and values that, if tuned to the right frequency, has the power to affect its users in unpredictable and often contradictory ways" (2011:18). Besides, Paasonen also has stated that "good pornography is whatever turns on its viewers, give rise to carnal resonance, and moves the bodies of those watching" (2011:185). Thus, the connection between pornography and

masturbation is commonly taken for granted not only among scholars but also among the public, which also forms the basis of the argument of psychological effects on viewers.

The analysis of the AV industry in Japan conducted by Wong and Yau, concludes that there is a common representation in AV that they call “salvage ideology”; which premises “men’s sexual domination over women, insomuch as women’s sexual pleasure is totally dependent on men” (2018:5). In short, the depiction of women in AVs is organised around the lack of agency of sexual pleasure. Women are generally represented as sexually innocent and found sexual pleasure in the end through men’s control over women’s bodies, despite their hesitation or refusal of sex in the beginning. From a different perspective, the philosopher Masahiro Morioka (2013) has argued that the underlying discourse in AVs was “to harm oneself” (2013: 68). This is for men to harm women and also their own esteem. Morioka’s perspective assumes that men in general feel inferior to female orgasm, compared to which he describes the male capacity for pleasure as “male sexual anesthesia” (ibid.). Men are therefore only able to feel sexual pleasure via dominance over women. Men watching AVs and jerking off to them means fulfilling the male sexual desire of controlling female sexual pleasure, but at the same time facing a feeling of awe in front of the tremendous female orgasm, which painfully intimidates male sexuality. Later Morioka has admitted multiple possibilities of male orgasm but argued “male sexual anesthesia” is neither biological nor technical term but a structural problem of the society we live in. Akagawa (1996) has simultaneously mentioned AVs function as a mode of production of sexualisation for men, as it is focused on the male “ability” to lead heterosexual sex lives. The argument around sexualisation is often centered around female (especially young) self-identification (Dine 2010; Attwood 2018); however, it does also affect men’s understanding of sex and gender. The point of Akagawa’s argument about male sexualisation is based on the fact that male figures in AVs are expected to have a gigantic penis which last longer than average, and which has become the overwhelming “ideal” for men. The ownership of such a penis signifies the agency to give sexual pleasure in the depiction of AVs, which returns us to the point of “salvage ideology”. Similar to Morioka, Akagawa also claimed that the system of AVs, albeit it stimulates and simulates a viewer’s presence in sex, never makes a viewer’s bodily identification possible as he is facing the painful reality of the difference of his own and the male actors’ penis.

The relationship between (heterosexual) men and the contents of the mainstream AVs has been discussed by its dual effects as two sides of the same coin, gaining physical and fantasy pleasure while disappointed or overwhelmed by their own sexuality. While the male sexualisation argument in relation to the consumption of AVs has shed some light on the

discussion of the vulnerability of male sexuality, this undeniably does not apply to female consumption of AVs. Both Akagawa and Morioka have admitted the possibility of a female audience for mainstream AVs, but this possibility was never a part of the main conversation as they emphasised the impact of AVs onto men. The problem here is that such a straightforward gendered relationship of content and audience has a limited use for the theorisation of the viewership of pornographic materials. For instance, the female consumption of Boys Love (male homosexual porn) can never be understood within such a framework. It is thus necessary to look at different systems of identification with pornographic materials.

The Problem of Carnal Identification: Female Consumption of Pornographic Material

Although there are only a few studies of consumption in the AV industry in general, there are considerable amounts of studies in regards to pornographic manga. The genres of Japanese manga are highly gendered and categorized according to different age groups. For instance, *shonen* (boys) manga which often depicts adventurous or sports-related action is aimed at boys aged from 11 to 18, while *shōjo* (girls) manga for girls in a similar age group mostly thematise romantic love stories in high school. Similarly, there is the manga genre for *seinen* (young adult men) and *jōsei* (young adult women). Some famous manga become popular among fans overseas regardless age and gender. Among those categories, *seijin* (matured adult) manga are pornographic manga which depict sexual intercourse, often known as *hentai* manga outside of Japan (Ortega-Brena 2009). *Seijin* manga contains several sub-genres such as Boys Love (BL, male homosexual erotic manga, which is formally known as *yaoi*) and Ladies' Comics, which are presumably consumed by women. Besides, the system of distribution and consumption of AVs was male dominated and difficult for women to access (For instance, AV sections of rental video shops are separated with curtains in order to keep out underaged persons). Therefore, Mori (2010) has argued women “read” pornography in contrast to men “watch” pornography.

It is often argued that pornography for women in Japan has emerged from *yaoi* which depicts male homosexual relationships since the early 1970s (Mori 2010 and Hori 2009). The main reason is that “[y]aoi is the fantasy where women who have been sexually objectified can escape from patriarchal society” (Hori 2009:128). Hori has argued that *yaoi* fans interpret homosexual relationships as equivalent to homosocial male bonding defined by Eve Sedgwick (1985). Sedgwick’s definition of homosocial male bonding is characterised by patriarchy and homophobia; however, Hori has employed the idea to describe the absence of female protagonists in *yaoi* manga. In this sense, it is possible to argue that female *yaoi* or BL fans

enjoy peeping at these homosocial and homosexual relationship as outsiders. It should be noted that it is rare for *yaoi* and BL manga to have bad endings. The male homosexual relationship in *yaoi* and BL is aimed at searching true romantic love regardless of heterosocial normativity. Here the question is what is the purpose of *yaoi* and BL's peeping romantic forbidden love and how can consumers bodily relate to protagonists?

The problem of body identification or carnal resonance (Paasonen 2011) is crucial to understand the sexual excitement of audiences, which is, after all the main purpose of pornography. In terms of pornography for men, Akagawa (1996) has argued that male audiences reassure their masculinity by looking at overly exaggerated female bodies to which they cannot relate to. On the other hand, Fujimoto (1999) has pointed out the dual identification of male erotic manga readers with male and female protagonists, which breaks down stereotypical gender roles associated with biological sex. Besides, Fujimoto has argued that Ladies' Comics shows how female pleasure is instigated and controlled by men because the existing social norm of female sexual passiveness; however, the femininity of the female protagonists would never be reduced regardless how hard she pursues sexual pleasure (1999). It seems that Akagawa and Fujimoto have attempted to draw a connection between the representation of gender and sex in manga, and the sexual orientation of readers, which does not explain consumption flows of *seijin* manga. Mori and Hori address these issues with a different approach, semiotic analysis, and an ethnography of readership.

Hori (2009) has applied semiotic analysis to subcategories of *seijin* manga by looking at different representations and how spectacles are shaped for readers. For male *seijin* manga, Hori has shared a similar view with Akagawa: that is, female body parts such as breasts and buttocks are used to exaggerate femininity, so that male readers would build an imaginary sexual relationship with female protagonists. For Ladies' Comic which are often based on real experience of the sexual encounter of readers (Mori 2010), female readers would relate to the female protagonists through empathy and bodily identification. On the other hand, *yaoi* and BL readers would be able to relate to both protagonists while enjoying scopophilia which is achieving voyeuristic pleasure by looking at others (Mulvey 1975).

Mori (2010), by employing qualitative and quantitative research, has analysed female readers' commentary and statistics of narrative structures and representations in 171 Ladies' Comic stories, 103 male *seijin* manga stories, and 30 *yaoi* manga stories. Mori categorised three different sexual roles, *seme* ("top", a dominant), *uke* ("bottom", a passive), and a "peeping tom" (*nozokiya*) who enjoyed voyeurism. While Mori has pointed out that any pornographic experience is based on voyeurism, bodily identification with *uke* and *seme* happens at the same

time. The way of focusing on the female body is common in male *seijin* manga and Ladies' Comic. The significant difference is the monologue of *uke*, often female protagonists in Ladies' Comic, which encourages female readers' identification. However, that does not mean that women do not enjoy male *seijin* manga. *Yaoi* and BL, according to Mori, are the significant examples of scopophilia, which is similar to Hori's point. Besides, Mori also has acknowledged that *yaoi* and BL can encourage homosexual identity, judged by comments from lesbian couples, by providing the depiction of different sexuality.

In this respect, identification with the pornographic representation in manga offers multiple possibilities which "do not alter the readers' social identity...identifications and desire are not restricted to or contained within a binary" (Shigematsu 1999:137). Thus, it might be nonsensical to draw a connection with readers' social sexual identity and their bodily identification and desire. However, it could be also be argued that the bodily identification might work differently between live-enacted and cartoon-based pornographic representations. Mariana Ortega-Brena wrote in her research of *hentai* animation that:

"our arousal to this spectacle of literally unreal sex and corporealities de-emphasises the self-reflective awareness of our lived-bodies insofar as our identification with these non-live, non-fleshed entities might give us entrance into a world of imagined, animated sensations" (Ortega-Brena 2009:28).

Before the popularisation of online pornographic websites, people would go to the secret section in video shops for purchasing AVs which was a highly male-dominated area. In addition to that, BL including *yaoi* and Ladies' Comic could be purchased in an ordinary bookshop, and the cover of comics was not identifiable as pornography at the first sight. Nonetheless, this dichotomy of the form of consumption of women-manga and man-AVs should be broken down for the reason that there are an increasing number of AVs for women in recent years, which will be the main topic in this thesis.

Conclusion

The chapter so far has reviewed how pornography was discussed in not only academic but also public in both Euromerican and Japanese contexts. To conclude, this section will summarise each section and as well as draw out key issues which I have found. The aim here is to elaborate analytical aspects which are crucial for my own research.

Firstly, by acknowledging the difficulty of defining the pornography in different times and places, I started with the early cinematic pornography known as *stag films* that were only exhibited in exclusively male-dominated place such as brothels and peep show theatres. Williams (1989) has described *stag films* as *scientia sexualis* in Foucault's term, which represents a voyeuristic male gaze at the female body and sexual pleasure. The idea was that only responsible adult men can consume those obscene materials. Pornographic films of *The Golden Age of Porn* since 1969 blurred the distinction between pornography and art by producing pornography with narratives and cinematic aesthetics. Alongside with the second wave of feminism, those new forms of pornography became one of the main concerns among feminists, known as feminists' *sex wars*. Anti-pornography feminists such as Dworkin and MacKinnon strongly criticised pornography for demeaning women and claimed the necessity of regulation of pornography. On the other hand, pro-pornography feminists such as Nadine Strossen and Gayle Rubin has argued that the importance for the freedom of speech and pornography can empower women and other marginalised groups of people with different sexualities. However, it is difficult to discuss pornography as a fixed term within feminists' frameworks due to its multiple interpretations.

Therefore, academic interest shifted towards studying pornography as cultural material form. In addition to that, there are increasing calls for academic research of the recent changes in the porn industry due to the technological development such as Porn 2.0. Some scholars such as Williams, Attwood, and Dine have claimed that we are living in an on/scene culture or sexualised culture where the accessibility of pornographic material is exceedingly easy, which brings public controversy. Porn studies thus emerged from concerns about the current porn-saturated culture, not to overly celebrate it. The aim of studying porn is not defining what is good or bad, but rather to analyse it as it is, as a certain cultural commentary regarding different sex, gender, and sexual orientations. Besides, the recent new cultural phenomenon of feminist and queer pornography, which is gaining increasing academic interest and provides an alternative space to mainstream pornography, although it is a still niche market. Porn studies is thus, I believe, an academic discipline which can shed light on essential parts of humanity in contemporary societies.

The chapter then looked at the development of Japanese contemporary pornography which had been influenced by the legal definition of the idea of obscenity. In this respect, the initial exaggeration of *sei hyōgen* can be understood as a political message in the Japanese film new wave movement during the 1960s, which does not necessarily cause sexual excitement. However, it seems to be fair to argue that the popularity of sex scenes has led to creating the

new genre of *pink films*, exploitive soft-core pornographic films. *Pink film* valued its cinematic photographic aesthetics so that they are still differentiated from AV films which are now considered to be the mainstream pornography in Japan.

Japanese version of *sex wars*, in a sense of feminists' debates on pornography problematised issues around *sei hyōgen* as demeaning to women, which contested with freedom of expression that had been achieved by challenging to the legal definition of obscenity. From the civic activity of *Kōdōsuru Onna-tachi no Kai*, the public exhibition of *sei hyōgen* has been regulated in search for gender equality as exemplified by the encouragement of self-regulation by the Cabinet Office as a minimum government's intervention in freedom of expression suggested by Kamiya's advocacy (1995). I have also argued that zoning of specific materials is important to protect those who do not want to see.

In regards to feminists' debates on commodification of sex, the chapter looked at Yumiko Ehara's two edited volume of *Feminism no Shuchō* (Statements of Feminsim) in 1992 and 1995, which has rich debates on the matter. Following to Hashizume and Sechiyama's arguments on autonomous wills and freedom of choices of sex workers (1992), several points were brought on the table. Such as whether sex moral is conceived as individual choice or a shared value (Nagata), the ambiguity of autonomous wills and structural gender inequality in regards to female sex work (Asano and Kawabata), and questioning the nature of commodification itself (Akagawa and Tateiwa). Simultaneously, as Akagawa and Tateiwa has indicated, the term commodification of sex is perhaps too broad and each case such as sex work, pornography, and gender representation should be carefully examined case by cases. However, these works do not exist on its own but correspond with each other as in the case of *eromen* and *lovemen* in this research. Having those discussions in mind, my aim is to look at commodification of sex from perspectives of female consumption.

Finally, the section looked at bodily identifications of pornography as is the main theme of consumption of pornography. Manabu Akagawa's analysis of *AV Onanie Kūkan* (masturbatory space of AV in 1996) has demonstrated how male sexuality is represented by camera angles and enforced by pornographic contents, as it is organised around female "to-be-looked-at-ness" (Mulvey 1975: 62) by the male gaze. Akagawa thus argued that AVs is influential to male sexualisation, implanting "ideal" male gender stereotypes who has an ability to sustain erection. From a slightly different perspective, Masahiro Morioka (2013) has indicated that male sexual fantasy often comes with desire for having control over women, due to male inferiority to women. By these arguments, it is fair to say that men are influenced by pornographic representation in heterosexual matrix. Perhaps, as Morioka argued, male sexual desire is

defined in a dual structure of desire to be accepted and having control over female bodies. Although both Akagawa and Morioka accept possibilities of female consumers of AVs, their argumentations only focus on male sexuality and did not capture gender dynamics of consumer experience. I have thus examined discussions around pornographic manga in this regard.

Pornographic manga in Japan is famously known as *hentai* (*seijin*) manga. *Hentai* manga includes sub-genres such as BL or *yaoi*, and Ladies' Comics which are classified as pornographic manga for female readers. There are some arguments that provide gendered interpreting systems for the reading of manga; however, by employing Mori's ethnographic research, I would argue that although there might be a different preference among readers self-identification should not be fixed according to gender and sexuality of those who read. Considering the separation between social gender and sexual identity and the consumer experience of pornography, the next question would be how far it is relevant when looking at different forms of pornography. Mori exclusively looked at manga due to the difficulty of female accessibility to video shops, which was before the popularity of online free pornography websites. Thus, the argument needs to be updated since the popularity of female-friendly pornography, known as *jôsei-muke* AVs is increasing. This will be the main focus of my research.

Chapter 2 Methodological Challenges

Introduction

The previous chapter has discussed the existing literature on pornography that inherited the ethos of cultural studies, film studies, and gender studies. Semantic analysis of representation of pornography is premised on that idea that representations in pornography reflects a certain reality of our society. As in the way of feminists' anti-pornography discourses (Dworkin and MacKinnon 1983 and *Kōdōsuru Onna-tachi no Kai* 1990) which assumes a particular social hegemony of patriarchal, contested, and demeaning to women. Dworkin (1989) exclusively argued that society was highly patriarchal which forced all women to be whores and pornography was just a representation of the patriarchal society. Simultaneously, Rubin Morgan's famous statement "Pornography is the theory, and rape is the practice" (1978:128) also claims a fixed social hegemonic understanding of a particular reality. While semantic analysis assumes that social reality and pornographic content reflect each other, we have to question what our reality consists of.

Thus, this chapter will address issues of methodology in the ethnography of audience studies. The previous chapter examined respectable researches on pornography in which I have found potentials for ethnographic study of porn consumers. However, audience reception studies of pornography often encounter difficulties and ethical limitations in selecting and accessing "audience" in a sense of active consumers of specific contents or texts. Previous researchers (Tzankova 2015, Wong and Yau 2014, Alilunas 2014, and Nornes 2014) have struggled with finding "audience", but still contributed to provide cultural reference to the contemporary pornography.

The aim of this section is thus to discuss the methodological framework by looking at previous arguments of academic scholars regarding mass media effect and audience reception studies. Media and communication studies have been concerned with mass media effects on audiences over decades. The premise of theoretical and sometimes quantitative approaches was that "mass media do something to people". However, the lack of audience-related theoretical frameworks was problematised especially by cultural studies scholars famously known as the Birmingham school. This trend of ethnographic study has enriched possibilities of anthropological studies on mass media – studying the relationship between mass media and people – which shall be my own methodological framework.

As my research, *jōsei-muke* AVs is supported by self-identified female fans, I will thus employ the terminology. In order to discuss the difference between fans and audiences, I refer to Henry Jenkins' fan studies. Originated from the word fanatics, the connotation of fan is excessive followers, which is not in the categories of Stuart Hall's active audience model; rather, as Jenkins defines, fan is social identity and often dominates a large part of that. Simultaneously, being fan connects with others who share the same enthusiasm for specific contexts or texts. The significance of fan communities is not just corresponding with original materials but also create their own meanings (Jenkins 1999 and Azuma 2001). Fans' interpretation and application is thus unique and would tell about a specific media phenomenon. I will thus employ the term "fans" rather than "audiences" or "users".

The chapter will then demonstrate details of my research. Starting with the introduction of field sites. Prior to the field work year from summer of 2018 to that of 2019, I have contacted to SOD about my research, which they welcomed my presence at series of events of *jōsei-muke* products. As all of these events were taken place in Tokyo, it became naturally my field site. Parallel to those physical events, I have also activated Twitter as it was a main tool for fans to receive information from *eromen* and *lovemen* as well as to communicate with each other. The correspondence of online/offline interactions will be significant in the main chapters.

Followingly, I have drawn biographical data of the research participants and addressed research ethics. I have interviewed with 32 people in total; majority was female fans of *jōsei-muke* AVs which also includes those who work for *jōsei-muke* AVs, former actors, and those who engage in other *jōsei-muke* services and products in order to examine how *jōsei-muke* adult industry corresponds with each other. Research participation was voluntary and each informant were consulted with myself prior to their participations, which I have obtained their consents either on paper or verbally. All the names were pseudonymised except for those who work as media personalities and private information of informants were modified to the extent not to effect on the research.

As my field work is based in Tokyo, my home town, it is crucial to address issues around native anthropology in regards to how I position myself in the field. As Kirin Narayan (1993) has argued, being born and grown up in the field site does not automatically lead to a different position of the researcher. It is true that one can find "exotic" culture within one's hometown. From a practical perspective, however, it is also important to emphasise that knowing language and cultural nuances has given me an advantage during my fieldwork. I will elaborate the discussion of the self and the other, which is problematised by several anthropologists. The main methodology of anthropology, "participant observation" contains a contradiction in the

way that it conditions participating and observing research subjects at the same time. The relationship of the self and the other thus is not fixed but dynamically intertwines. In this respect, I will share my own experience of reflexivity in the field as a one person who interacts with informants and influence them as I am influenced by my informants. In spite of this, note that all interviews and field notes were consented to by those who have voluntarily participated to my research. In the last section, I will discuss the issue on erotic subjectivity. As Kulick and Wilson (1995) have argued, the researchers' gender and sexuality inevitably plays a significant role in the fieldwork, despite the fact that talking about these issues is still stigmatised in anthropology. Simultaneously, sexual harassment and overt sexualisation in the field has been also pointed out by several scholars (Kloß 2017, Hanson and Richards 2019), which I believe brings much more scope for future discussion. I would like to close this chapter by a plea for those issues to be much more considered.

Studying Pornography?

What we see sometimes does not correspond with others' perception. Here I am talking about the possibility of multiple reality. From a phenomenological perspective, the lifeworld (Lebenswelt) is a type of reality which is defined as relational and shared by others through communication. While there are different layers of realities, the Lebenswelt is the layer that is socially accessible according to Schützian philosophy. Manabu Akagawa (1996) has argued that there is also an erotic reality which is often co-created by pornographic materials. Pornography is, in the same way as other forms of media, often produced with a purpose to serve fantasy or phantasy (to emphasise psychological affects referring to Mulvey 1975) in order to let consumer escape from their humdrum existence. However, this does not mean that it provides immediate carnal resonance for those who watch pornographic materials. In order to complete the articulation of pornographic content, in other words, to make sense within the context of pre-existing reality, the audience has to understand its meaning and moreover identify with it both emotionally and physically. Some might get turned off by picture of toes, while other would not. Pornographic experience therefore is to be understood as subjective system, which explains the vast amounts of different genres and fetishes in the industry.

On the other hand, audience reception research has revealed the dynamics of different interpretations of pornography. The study of users' voice of pornography has been conducted by several scholars (Hites 2003; Loftus 2002; Tzankova 2015; Wong and Yau 2014). The Hite report on female sexuality (2003) and the Hite report on men and male sexuality (2014) are

both analyses of interviews with 3,000 women of the age 14 to 78 and 7,000 men of the age 13 to 97. Both reports illustrated female and male masturbatory use of pornography, which directly opposed the anti-pornography feminists' argument of pornography as a way of male domination of women. Furthermore, the report on men also described antagonistic feelings of men towards pornography. The majority of men reported that they enjoy pornography, but at the same time they did not feel it represented real heterosexual relationships (Hites 2003). Similarly, David Loftus'(2002) ethnographic attempt of collecting male opinions from 150 participants of the age 19 to 67 in Europe and North America, demonstrated various views towards pornography. While some enjoyed pornography, others had strong oppositions to the representation of pornography. In this respect, both Hites' and Loftus' research rejected the anti-pornography feminists' over-generalised idea of pornography as a representation of male sexual desire.

More recently, Veronika Tzankova (2015) has conducted an online ethnography of female reception of pornography in the Republic of Turkey. Due to the mass accessibility of the internet, online pornography became available to Turkish women who have otherwise been viewed as oppressed in the patriarchal society. Tzankova analysed online forums which were used as a platform for sexual confessions and found five main practical uses of pornography among women. According to Tzankova, pornography for those women is a tool for education, breaking daily routines, discovering female homosexual desire, discovering new fetishism, and voyeuristic pleasure by observing male homosexual sex. Tzankova has argued that "women's consumption of porn in Turkey becomes a particular sort of epistemic positioning which participates in the construction and deconstruction of what is socially imposed as 'right' or 'wrong' in the female practices of sex" (2015:216). As Tzankova has admitted, the limit of resources due to the stigmatisation of the topic, and the research integrity of doing an ethnography of online forum is still questionable. On the other hand, Wong and Yau's (2014) ethnography of women's use of pornography in Taiwan revealed that 18 out of 22 female participants of the age 21 to 52 had no interest in pornography, although some of them had watched pornography due to the request of male partners. The research illustrated that Taiwanese women disliked Japanese AV more than American pornography because Taiwanese men preferred Japanese to American, which indicated the expression of frustration as women within a patriarchal East Asian society. The problem here is that the selection of research participants is arbitrary. Wong and Yau claimed to focus on "women's use of pornography" (2014: 1); however, the research did not show any autonomous, independent (from male partners) engagement with pornography among Taiwanese women. Although both Tzankova

and Wong and Yau successfully have provided empirical material about the reception of contemporary pornography in specific contexts, an ethnography of pornography still has a lot of difficulties in the selection of and accessibility to participants.

From a theatrical perspective, there are a few researches on Japanese *pink film* cinemas. Although the numbers of *pink cinemas* are decreasing (only two remaining cinemas in Tokyo), *pink films* have been gaining academic interests for its economic scale and cinematographic cinema photographic aesthetics especially during its heyday in the 1970s (Nornes 2014). As stated in the previous chapter, *pink films* occupied the film market, even threatening major film studios. However, “it was mainly in the 1980s after the appearance of video-based AV that the Pink theaters increasingly transformed into the *hattenba* – literally ‘places where things develop’ – that they are today” (Nornes 2014:14). *Hattenba*, as de’ ethnographic description has demonstrated, is a cruising ground where men look for one-time homosexual partner. There has been, however, several attempts to include female audiences in *pink film* market. For instance, Ueno Okura Theatre in 2010, organised a women’s only viewing event as a renovated opening ceremony²⁶. The event assumingly echoed with the popularity of *pink films* among women such as *Nikkatsu Roman Porn*²⁷ which were re-made and exhibited in cinemas since 2010s, especially targeting female audiences. As Saitoh, the manager of Ueno Okura Theatre has suggested²⁸, however, it is difficult to regularly organise women’s only events as *pink film* cinema has been predominantly a male (especially old) arena. Despite of renovation of the cinema building of Ueno Okura Theatre, it is often rumored that the second floor of the building prohibits cisgender heterosexual women’s entrance as is used for *hattenba*. This also challenges to the idea of “audience” as “[a]dult film audiences, particularly in public spaces such as theatres and peep booths, have long used their surroundings as a means to a pleasurable end, either alone or with nearby willing partners” (Alilunas 2014:400).

Audience reception of pornography is thus difficult to grasp. Although respectable previous researches provoked female consumption of pornography, there are none description of specific contents. Insomuch that consuming pornography itself – despite it is a genre of mass media – conveys a unique sociopolitical meaning. This also suggests that consumption of pornography is not only about “viewing” content but also a means for others such as a means for stimulating sexual excitement alone or with partners. Followingly, I will examine how

²⁶ “Joyū mo Kanki! Pink Eiga-kan de ‘Kami Ibento’ wo shikaketa Shihainin (Delighted Female Actor! The Manager Who Planed a ‘Divined Event’ at Pink Film Cinema)”, 2015 October 30, *Aera dot*. Available at: <https://dot.asahi.com/dot/2015103000002.html?page=1> [Accessed 21 December 2022].

²⁷ A series of *pink films* produce by by Nikkatsu, one of the biggest studios in Japan from 1973 to 1988.

²⁸ Ibid.

“viewing” has been discussed in the traditional of media studies and how to consider the “audience” in an era of “polymedia” (Miller 2013) in which contemporary lives are surrounded by different uses of mass media tools, followed by a discussion of anthropology of media.

Media effects studies and Active audience

Media studies scholars have been interested in how mass media could influence audiences’ behaviors and understandings of reality. As commonly known, Benedict Anderson (1983) discussed the connection between mass production and the rise of consciousness of imagined community within the circulation of the printed materials, there has been a strong assumption of mass media somehow shaping our perception of reality.

The Frankfurt school’s critical theory which was influenced by Marxism described mass media as a power that dominates people ideologically, which is known as the hypodermic needle theory of media. The cultural industry (Adorno and Horkheimer 1979) is a series of manufactured culture which constantly reproduces the same ideology overtimes through different mass media forms, which gradually implants a certain ideology in vast audience. The cultural industry theory might sound classic to conceptualize the contemporary society where people can actively engage with mass media on the Internet. However, as Des Freedman has written, “although the internet is facilitating an enormous increase in content as well as the means of distributing this content, it is doing so on the basis of economic and consumer trends that are not that dissimilar to those of the past (2012:89)”. Thus, the structural framework of powerful mass media institution and audience is still relevant, which was inherited by political economists in media studies. Political economists are interested in the study of social and economic dynamics of the mass media industry (Curran and Grevitch 1982, Curran and Grevitch 1991, Curran, Fenton and Freedman 2012). Their main concern is the hegemonic power and the ownership of mass media from a Marxist perspective which premises that society consists of structured inequalities between different classes. Political economists often analyze mass media industry which presumably has the powerful and commercial influence to audiences. While political economists conducted little research on the actual audience reception, they take the power of mass media for granted and often emphasises that mass media tells the audience to what think rather than providing objective facts (McCombs and Shaw 1972).

On the other hand, in order to study mass media effect to the audience empirically, there are several attempts to conduct experimental research, often subsumed as the Behaviorist approach.

The premise here is that there is a direct causal relationship between mass media contents and people's behavior. Albert Bandura's social learning theory which here describes that people learns from observing an imitating a specific object was groundbreaking (Bandura 1963). Bandura's theory which was underlying an experimental study of children's behaviors implied that there was the direct causal relationship between experimented children's behavior and aggressive objects either real-life, filmed, or animated. Although the longitudinal experimental research method has been criticised as artificial and unethical (Livingstone 1998), similar researchers from Behaviorist approach have been conducted such as Malamuth and Briere's (1986) research on the relation of pornography and sexual aggression of male university students in US. However, it should be noted that questions which were employed by Malamuth and Briere were highly manipulative (Such as "if you could be assured that no one would know and that you could in no way be punished for engaging in the following acts ('forcing a female to do something she really didn't want to do' and 'rape'), how likely, if at all, would you be to commit such acts?") (Briere et al 1981:5 in Russell 1988). In this respect, it is better to be skeptical of the direct causal relationship of media and human behavior.

In contrast to the assumption of powerful mass media, there are arguments which emphasize the importance of interpersonal influence. Two-step flow theory developed by Elihu Katz and Paul Lazarsfeld (1955) described opinion leaders who achieved information through different mass media spectrum were more influential on political decision making of a wider population than mass media itself. This liberal-pluralists' approach considers mass media as something positive to audiences. Similarly, Use and gratification theory which was also elaborated by Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch (1974) suggested that people actively or selectively engaged with mass media in order to satisfy their own needs. The functional use of mass media is depending on individual choice; as such, the power of mass media is not strong enough to manipulate people's identity. This positivistic approach was often criticized by political economists (Curran 2002 and Curran, Fenton and Freedman 2012) for over-celebrating mass media and ignoring the process of production and the ownership of mass media contexts. Nonetheless, the liberal-pluralists' approach led to a change in focus on not what mass media do to people but what people do with mass media, which was elaborated by active audience study from cultural studies approach.

The pioneering essay of *Encoding/Decoding in the Television Discourse* written by Stuart Hall (1973), a leading figure of cultural studies gave the receiving side a more active role in interpreting the message. Hall focused on the process of articulation which is the moment when a certain meaning is created by looking at senders' and receivers' positionalities. Firstly, a

certain meaning or discourse must be created in certain social and cultural frameworks through production and then transmission to receivers. Discourses are already set in certain social and cultural frameworks, but the meaning can vary depending on receivers. In this sense, each discourse has different modes of production of meaning during the process of transmission. Therefore “meaning” should be studied as a process of encoding and decoding which enables us to understand what ideological discourse is implied, and how meaning is decoded and interpreted in different world-views and social circumstances. In order to understand the dynamics of different audience reception, Hall broadly categorised three codes of interpretation, the dominant-hegemonic code, the negotiated code, and the oppositional code. The dominant-hegemonic code occurs when receivers unconditionally agree with the discourse in mass media. The negotiated code is, as it is already implied, that audience partly agrees and disagrees with mass media context. The assumption here is that most members of the audience already understand the implicit ideological discourse and they relate to it legitimately according to their own social and cultural values. The last one is the oppositional code when the audience cannot agree or understand the meaning of mass media context.

Hall’s audience-oriented reception model was exceedingly influential and brought the emphasis on the importance of literary studies and ethnographical approach to audience reception. Employing this method, David Morley conducted an ethnographic’ study of the audience of the *Nationwide* (1999; 2005). In the development of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies University of Birmingham, often known as Birmingham School, Grimshaw et al (1980) emphasised the importance of ethnography as cultural studies’ methods in order to find fundamental issues underlying in the Capitalist society. Ethnographic methods entered in cultural studies’ interests in media effect seeking for audience voices, in response to previous works on media of the Frankfurt school which premised ideological domination over mass (“the ethnographic turn”). By conducting audience-oriented research, the *Nationwide* audience research provided a model for further studies. For instance, Katz and Liebe (1990) analysed different interpretations of American soap opera *Dallas* among overseas audiences and claimed that people with different values would be protected from ideological domination.

Cultural studies’ application of ethnography in media studies has been challenging to anthropologists, calling out for the importance of embedded politics into everyday life such as gender, race, and social class systems (McEahern 1998). “Mass media were seen as almost a taboo topic for anthropology (...). As media are becoming more ubiquitous even in remote locals, an increasing number of anthropologists have recognised not only the necessity of attending to their presence but also their significance”, said Faye Ginsburg in introduction of

media anthropology (2005:17). The interaction between cultural studies and anthropology thus shed a light on the significance of ethnographic approaches to diverse mass media towards millennials.

Anthropology of Media, Audience beyond Production and Consumption Nexus

In 1993, Deborah Spitulnik's report *Anthropology and Mass Media* predicted the great significance of the anthropological study of mass media due to the technological change in our modern society. "In our society, the technologies of the future are here today: interactive television, virtual reality, electric town halls, digital compression, direct satellite broadcasting, and the fax. Significantly, many of these new developments supplant the 'mass' of mass media, making them more individual and interpersonal" (1993:307). The fragmentation of mass media that it is now in common today, it is important to question how people engage with these mass media and how the "mass of mass media" (1993:307) influence our understanding of ourselves and others. Therefore, the anthropology of media which is different from visual anthropology is significant for the sake of understanding the relationship between mass media and people. While visual anthropology focusing on issues underlying representation, anthropology of media seeks to understand how people engage with media in their daily lives (Ginsburg 2005 and Osorio 2005).

In regards to the term "audience", Stephen Hughes (2011) has pointed out its problematic nature, since "audience" is an unstructured group which is always reconstituted with each different media experience. As such, the ethnographic turn from anthropologists' attempts to embrace the issue and consider the audience as a concrete research problem rather than understanding the audience as a mode of address. Anthropology referring to mass media should be looking at what people do with mass media, how they talk about it and why it matters to them. As Hughes has written, "audience studies should be conceived as the study of media-related practices, the point is to investigate how people actually argue, construct, and contest the media worlds in which they live and why they do or do not matter" (2011: 311). In this sense, anthropology has its strength because they are experts in the study of people and lived experience. There have been thus increasing anthropological studies of mass media and how people engage with it.

Toshie Takahashi's analysis (2009) the use of ICT (information and communication technology) such as telephones and computers in Tokyo metropolitan area, used the term "audience" to "refer to people, as group or individuals, in their capacity as engagers with media and ICT in their everyday lives" (2009:5), while sometimes alternating it with "users" and

“consumers” depending on appropriateness for different situations. Takahashi then focused on audience engagement in different use of mass media rather than “active audience”, as it “compasses any type of engagement from merely turning on television, computer or mobile phone to critical and political engagement with media and ICT” (2009:7).

On the other hand, Daniel Miller’s digital ethnography has demonstrated the epistemological shift of understanding people who are regularly engaging with different media practice. In his ethnography on Facebook (Miller 2011, Miller and Sinanan 2017), Miller constantly uses the word “users” when referring to people who post their pictures on Facebook while describing people who saw those posts as the audience. In addition to that, “polymedia” according to Miller (2013) is that people in the contemporary society live in the media-saturated milieu so that each media practice should be studied individually. In this respect, it might be better to apply different terminology such as audience and users according to various media experience, which enables to understand media practice from different dimensions.

Fan Studies and Participatory Culture

By addressing issues underlying the nature of audience and the possibilities of different terminology for those who engage with media practice, I would like to introduce an alternative methodological framework for searching audience. Fan studies which is introduced by Henry Jenkins (1999) offers methodological framework for the focus group of a specific cultural phenomenon.

The term “fan” itself is rooted in “fanatics” (“fanaticus” in Latin) which literally signifies excessive religious devotion and often connotes negative image of madness (Jenkins 1999). Its first appearance was in the 19th century when describing followers of sport activities such as baseball teams. As Jenkins pointed out, the word fan “never fully escaped its earlier connotations of religious and political zealotry, false beliefs, organic excesses, possessions, and madness, connotations that seems to be at the heart of many of the representation of fans in contemporary discourse” (1999:12). The negative image of fans as excessive followers is often appeared in popular culture such as *Misery* (1990 Castle Rock Entertainment), *The Fan* (1996 Mandalay Pictures), *Perfect Blue* (1997 MADHOUSE), portraying fan as excessive psychopathic stalkers. Despite of those negative image, Jenkins defines fans as those who “construct their cultural and social identity through borrowing and inflecting mass culture images, articulating concerns which often go unvoiced within the dominant media” (1999:72). In regards to difference from “audience”, Jenkins added; “fans cease to be simply an audience

for popular texts; instead, they become active participants in the construction and circulation of meaning” (ibid.). Similarly, Duffet (2013) also indicated that the significant difference between fans and any other media consumers is that fans are self-identified and show particular enthusiasm for a specific media context. In this sense, I consider being “fan” is a social and cultural identity for those who follow, support, and devote to specific mass media. This also echoes with the idea of *oshi-katsu* in Japan, a supporting activity which is a means for self-realisation (see Introduction). The emphasis is on “identity”, a sense of belonging to one’s favourite as in the way that “*oshi* is my backbone” (Usami 2020:37).

Simultaneously, fans often collectively gather and show different interpretation to each other or sometimes produce their own media products creatively. This is a crucial aspect when reminding previous media studies’ interest in active audience theoretical frameworks such as Hall’s encoding/ decoding model (1973). Jenkins (1999) applied Michel de Certeau’s idea of “poaching” which indicated active appropriation by using pre-existing rules or materials. Text “poaching” in this sense is to use a certain framework or characteristic of the original text for creating something new. Fan culture thus could be different from what media producers expect to be. Besides, media producers are sometimes influenced by fans’ interpretations, although it does not completely reject pre-existing power balance between producers and fans (Spano 2016). The relationships between fans and producers are varied. They could be collaborative or antagonistic. Jenkins defines, “[s]ometimes, fans respond to this situation with a worshipful deference to media producers yet, often they respond with hostility and anger against those who have the power to ‘retool’ their narrative into something radically different from that which the audience desires” (1999:24). Similarly, Hiroki Azuma (2001) introduced the idea of “data-based model” as a description of Japanese animation fandom culture. According to Azuma, fans, in the postmodern era which Azuma has argued that the Internet saturated society, do not consume ground narratives which are provided by producers but rather consume different series of fragmented data. It is a phenomenon where there are always pre-established values in the original contexts and according to each fans’ interpretation of those values, different contexts can be created by fans. Both Jenkins’ and Azuma’s theoretical frameworks of fan culture demonstrate the possibility which fan culture should be studied separately from what media producers intended to. Fan culture does not exist alone but corresponds with mainstream culture; therefore, the relationship between two should be looked at in order to understand a specific media-related phenomenon. Fans’ interpretation of specific texts and their application to every day lives thus shall be a focus of this research.

The most significant characteristic of fan culture is that fandom is an informal community of fans who are fully aware of their purpose and actively engaging in the community. Participatory culture in Jenkins' definition (1999, 2017) is the sum of customs which is shaped by autonomous individuals. To some extent, any culture is participatory. Lave and Wenger's (1991) definition of the community of practice illustrated any different level or amount of engagement contributed to a certain community. Simply being there is a form of participation especially when it comes to considering the nature of Web2.0. Jenkins (2015) also has stated that Web2.0 is a platform or tool of participatory culture and does not determine what to participate in. For instance, Lawrence Eng's (2012) research on online and offline interaction of *otaku* (which refers to Japanese anime and *manga* fans) in US has illustrated the way people share their interests, enthusiasms, and knowledge in a local communal space, while interacting with other people in online board. The collaboration between online interaction and physical interaction demonstrated how fan culture is reproduced and at the same time developed by new information from different fans. In this respect, fan culture is democratic and diverse so that it allows metabolic symbiosis according to members of the community. Due to the nature of fandom, each fan community is active and visible regardless online or offline so that researcher who concerns of media influence can look at them as their academic subject.

Finding Field and People: Practical Methodology

By employing fan studies, this research exploratory looks at the fandom culture of *jōsei-muke* AVs, especially surrounding around its male porn actors. In order to attempt to capture the whole pictures of *jōdei-muke* AVs, the triangle relationship of production, audiences (fans), and mass media coverages is a main focus of this research as Akagawa's pronounce (1996) of "sociology of pornography". My contribution here would be, by situating a fans-oriented approach, to demonstrate their daily-basis engagement with consumption of fantasy which *jōsei-muke* AVs offers and how their understanding of love and intimacy are. I strongly believe that anthropology of media, despite its developing methodology, is significant to fill the gap between the sender-receiver relationship, allowing us to examine how messages in *jōsei-muke* AVs is created, exhibited, received, and interpreted beyond the nexus of producers, male actors, and fans. The fieldwork was then conducted in Tokyo Metropolitan area from summer in 2018 to that of 2019.

Regarding studying of the production side, Soft on Demand (SOD), one of the monopolistic AV companies in Japan is a focus of the research. SOD has been a frontrunner of the *jōsei-*

muke AVs market and now is only major production which has *jōsei-muke* production lines. In the last decade, there was increasing new small productions of *jōsei-muke* AVs entering the market; however, none of them last long due to the highly competitive nature of the industry. The marketing strategy of SOD centers not providing contents in forms such as DVDs or online streaming but fan meeting events of porn actors. For that reason, I took monthly fan meeting events as a main field interest. Simultaneously, the crucial part of the field work was a series of interviews with employees of SOD who engages with productions of *jōsei-muke* AVs. Eri Makino, a producer of SILK LABO which is one of *jōsei-muke* production lines of SOD, kindly enough to have given me a permission of my presence in those events. I also came across with other employees of SOD who voluntarily contributed to the research.

By attending those fan meeting events, I became close to some participants; female fans. The fandom already consists of self-identified fans, which I have never any problem of “searching for audience” despite it is often a big challenge considering the nature of the pornographic contents. Interestingly, the liminal atmospheres of the fandom which differs from other social forms in Japan where women are not supposed to expose their sexual desire set a certain emotional boundary between female fans. I eventually became a part of their group and we often went for drinks, after fan meeting events or even on casual occasions. Some of them became my close friends and we still remained in touch.

Simultaneously, SNS especially Twitter has played an important role, as it is the biggest online interaction tool among female fans. As well as that, each *eromen* and *lovemen* has their own Twitter accounts so that they can engage with fans in order to promote fan meeting events. Some fans are eager to connect with other fans via Twitter to share their interests and enthusiasm for *eromen* and *lovemen*. They state their own favorite, or *oshi/oshi-men*, (*oshi* is for pushing or recommending and *men* is for member and men) in self-introduction section of their Twitter account top pages. This strategy echoes with the ethos of anthropology of media, in the way of concentrating on both off and online. In addition to that, analysing mass media coverage is also important as news concerning the AV industry is often reported in magazines or tabloid, not in the mainstream newspaper. Thus, I have visited Oya Sōichi library in Setagaya, Tokyo which is a unique library specialising magazines and tabloid papers from Edo period to the present. Especially, the weekly women lifestyle magazine *an•an* which often features pornography for women including SILK LABO will be the main focus of collection. *an•an* is a nation-wide popular magazine that combats explicitly against the perceived threat of sexlessness, which I find a connection to contemporary Japanese society

Another crucial part of the field work was that keeping signals for other adult business for women such as sex toy makers specialising in products for women and *jōsei-muke fūzoku* (sex-related shops or brothels for women)²⁹, which was an increasing new industry. The time when I started my field work, the year of 2018 was considered as the boosted year of *jōsei-muke fūzoku*. SOD also strategically produces collaborations with them as *jōsei-muke fūzoku* provides male escort services which actualised fantasy of *jōsei-muke* adult videos. I therefore conducted interviews with a female owner of *jōsei-muke fūzoku* shop and male escorts.

Participants and Ethics of the Research

During a year-long field work, I have interviewed 4 employees working for *jōsei-muke* production lines at SOD, 20 female fans who regularly attended events, 2 former actors in AVs, 6 people (both male and female) who engage in *jōsei-muke* adult industry such as *jōsei-muke fūzoku* and *jōsei-muke* sex shops. Except for those who work as media personalities such as Makino and Fukase at SOD, all personal names are pseudonymised although female fans and those who work in *jōsei-muke* adult industry used their twitter account names or nicknames.

The focus of the research, female fans' characteristics are those who live and work in the Kanto region (Tokyo, Chiba, Saitama, and Kanagawa) at the time of the field work, and their age ranges from 20 at the minimum and 40s at maximum (I did not ask the exact age of some informants as it is considered impolite in Japanese culture). Not to over-generalise female fans' *jōsei-muke* AVs, but the majority of female fans whom I have encountered are single women from mid-20s to mid-30s, working full-time living alone or with parents. Despite of a few married part-time workers with children, most women are neither married nor in romantic relationship at the time. In contrast to the former, who are attending events mostly on weekends due to the house keeping and child caring, the latter attempt to attend as many events as possible, because they have more time and money for fan practices. These "regular" attendees know each others and form groups in small numbers. Some connected prior to events on Twitter, while others were acquainted with each other through series of events. The group which I became close to consisted of 5 to 6 people; however, the members of group was not fixed. New faces often joined or were introduced by existing members of the group. In this sense, the group was so welcoming that I could join the group despite being open about my status as researcher. This is in contrast to some groups at events who never spoke to strangers, but whose I could

²⁹ The term *fūzoku-ten* is an umbrella term for any sex-related shops and there are tremendous amounts of genres and styles of *fūzoku-ten*. E.g. hand job shops, erotic massages, SM play themed service, and *no panties café* which female waitress serve customers without wearing any underwear.

still recognize as familiar “regulars”. As a group, we often went for coffee or drinks after events, and I have become close to some of the members with whom I have conducted life history interviews with. Additionally, or depending on the nature of events – for instance, private events of a specific *eromen* and *lovemen*, I have come across other female fans who attended events alone and eventually agreed to interviews.

After discovering SOD’s business collaboration with *jōsei-muke fūzoku* (eg. recruiting male escorts for *eromen* and *lovemen* and later SOD opened *jōsei-muke fūzoku* shop in 2020), I have conducted interviews with those who engage with *jōsei-muke fūzoku* shops, owners and male therapists. This is to investigate womens’ sex positive attitudes surrounding *jōsei-muke* AVs and its franchises. Additionally, I have also interviewed those who had worked in the AV industry to gain a better understanding of the current climate of the industry. Please note that it was difficult to reach out to active AV actors as it was rumoured that some of agencies were associated with yakuza – although big production companies like SOD are clean. The navigation of my fieldwork was carefully consulted with Dr. Gygi, assessing potential risks and dangers for my informants and myself.

Following to SOAS ethic policy and ethical guidelines for good research practice published by Association of Social Anthropologists of the UK and the Commonwealth (ASA), participants of the research were informed the nature of research and consent for withdrawal. I also obtained consent either on paper or verbally (see Appendix for the consent form) and made sure that participation is voluntary. Participants were informed that they were able to leave the research at any time they wanted and had an access to the field work data which they involved in if required by them. If that happens, I made sure that any data associated with the participant including field notes, audio recording, and transcripts would be destroyed. Due to the nature of my research, the topics is involved in sensitive and personal topics such as participants’ sexual practice and their use of pornography. I am very aware that female consumption of pornography is still highly stigmatised in Japan as argued by Mori (2010), although this might be changing due to the popularity of SILK LABO. Thus, I shall make huge efforts for respecting their privacy and personal security by anonymisation of personal data. Therefore, informants are all pseudonymised and all the personal information which does not necessarily crucial for the research (e.g. exact birthplaces or occupations) are changed for privacy protection purposes.

Native Anthropologist: Positioning Myself in the Field

As my field work was based in Tokyo where I was born and grew up, this would be to some extent a case of anthropological research at home. Although it is getting common for anthropologists to study their home country, it is important to clarify my own positionality in the field which I study.

The difference of “inside” and “outside”, or “native/indigenous” and “regular” anthropologists has been discussed with some intensity since the crisis of representation in anthropology. Some would argue that “native” or “indigenous” anthropologists have advantages for understanding cultures of their subject and for producing knowledge which is unproblematic and authentic. Kirin Narayan (1993) addressed this discussion from her position which had been labelled as a “native” anthropologist. Narayan has argued that there should not be any difference regarding the origin or cultural backgrounds of anthropologists. Following to Narayan’s argument, I have never been involved in the Japanese sex or AV industry and in this sense, I am an outsider. Simultaneously, the AV industry in Japan itself is already self-contained, which is often hard to know what is really happening inside even if you live in Japan and is often rumoured to have illicit connection with Japanese yakuza³⁰.

Having partly agreed to Narayan’s point of no difference between native/non-native anthropologist, I have to admit that the biggest advantages of this research was me being a native Japanese speaker and born in Tokyo. Due to the nature of my research, most of my field settings were informal and casual meetings with people whom I have met; which would have been difficult without knowing a certain mannerism and linguistic nuances. This might be admittedly controversial to say; however, Japanese people living in Japan tend to have dichotomist sense of insider (Japanese people) and outsider (non-Japanese people), which is problematised with the word *gaijin*. The word is coined of *gai* (outside) and *jin* (human being) and signifies foreigner; however, it also implies a sense of the *other* and often judged by ones’ non-Japaneseness such as appearance, behaviour, language, and any kinds which evokes connections to foreign countries. This is certainly not to suggest that non-natives are incapable of conducting fieldwork in a country like Japan; however, it has to be emphasised that in-depth understanding of researched language and culture is crucial.

The hegemonic discourse of homogenous society of Japan has been addressed by several researchers (Oguma 1995 and Kan 2004). The intellectual common sense is that Japan is

³⁰ Note that SOD is clean from those illicit group of people. It was rumored that some actor agency had been connected to yakuza business.

multiracial country as having minority racial and cultural groups such as Korean-Japanese, Ainu, Okinawan, and Brazilian-Japanese as these are learnt in compulsory education. There is, however, a tendency of differentiation of those minority people from “Japanese” people. I dare not say this is unique to Japanese society, rather this is to do with degree of knowledge and awareness. Those minority people who speak Japanese language, understand and assimilate to Japanese culture, and sometimes hold Japanese nationality are positioned in a liminal status (Kan 2004) between Japanese and *gaijin*, including myself who identifies as Korean-Japanese³¹. This fluidity of identity allowed me to play around people during my fieldwork; most of time I use my Japanese card, while there was a moment that things went smoother by claiming myself as Korean-Japanese. Besides, my field work year 2019 faced increasing diplomatic tension between South Korea and Japan³², which incited anti-Korean sentiment among Japanese public. I therefore dare not claim my Korean side of identity too often. In addition to that, the fact that I was studying at British university gave me a weird entitlement. Japan, in the same as other Eastern Asian countries such as China and South Korea, is predominantly built upon meritocracy based on academic background, inheriting Confucianism ethos. Studying abroad in western countries, or even just speaking English is considered as cultural capital in East Asian countries. I therefore often encountered moments where people seeking me a certain knowledge as if I were capable of it. There was for instance a moment when some of my informants asking me about general knowledge of sex and romantic relationships despite of the fact that studying pornography did not qualify any in-depth understanding of those.

Secondly, it is essential to mention that me being from Tokyo was also playing an important role during this journey. Tokyo, needless to say is a capital city of Japan and one of the biggest metropolises in the world. The city is home to 13.5 million people, whereas 9.2 million people lives within 23 wards of metro area. Residential areas including where my house at are surrounding busy downtowns such as Shinjuku and Shibuya, iconic neon light towns of Tokyo. As my middle/high school was located nearby, Shinjuku has been a playground of my youth. The main areas of Shinjuku, which has eventually become my main field site, is known for its rich nightlife options; Kabuki-chō where accommodates thousands of host/hostess clubs, *fūzoku-ten*, and love hotels³³ and Shinjuku Ni-chōme is well-known for gay/lesbian bars and

³¹ This results from the fact that my grandfather is a migrant during Japanese colonisation of Korea. In spite of my Japanese nationality, I identify myself as the third generation of Korean-Japanese migrant from political reason.

³² This resulted from South Korean Supreme Court order Japanese firm to compensate for conscripted workers of the colonial time.

³³ It is a genre of short-stay hotel primarily designed for allowing guests' private sexual activities.

clubs. The joyful place as is full of arcades centers and karaoke boxes during the day for a student as I once used to be; however, my parents often warned me not to walk around Shinjuku during the night. The main street of Kabuki-chō during the night is always full of early career hosts looking for clients and pimps examining potential sex workers. As Suzumi Suzuki (2013) argues, it is exceedingly easy for young Japanese girls who live in Tokyo to sell their sexuality and I admit that I have encountered several opportunities during my youth in Shinjuku, which could have been doorways to the sex industry. My mother once said to me, Kabuki-chō is a quicksand of human desires, there is no escape once you *live* there. These men on the street are persistent. Any women walking Kabuki-cho had better know means to avoid them at all costs; otherwise, it would be easy to get caught in a trap. This ethnographic study later will also take a grasp of women in Shinjuku. Nonetheless, my previous ontological and epistemological understanding of Shinjuku navigated this ethnographic journey smoother.

All above therefore has demonstrated the nature of my “nativeness” in the field. It is also important to emphasise that this “nativeness” should not be defined by race, nationality, or any biological term; rather it is to be understood as empirical understanding of a specific culture, which is acquired by series of commitments. This “nativeness” thus gives a nuanced framework to absorb any thing which would happen in the field; in this sense it is certainly a huge advantage. There are however always new and unexpected events or things in the field as in the same way with any kinds of knowledge production system. Researchers, regardless of their self-identification, should be ready to anything new and shocking, even if comes with drastic change in their previous understanding. Dorinne Kondo, a Japanese-American anthropologist whose field site was also Japan, has indicated that a crucial aspect of epistemological status as a researcher is “the degree of distance – personal and cultural, emotional and cognitive (the split between the two terms are themselves artefacts of our own language and cultural categories) – from one’s informants” (1986:84). By acknowledging this distance, Kondo suggested to be opened to the Otherness in/outside the Self.

Beyond the Nexus of Self and Other

Anthropological journey often starts with a researcher entering the field site with a huge ambition of looking for something interesting and useful to their subject. The moment when they enter the field, the presence of researcher would inevitably influence people and participants around them. One of my favourite anthropological stories, Marshal Sahlins’ (1981) portrayal of Captain Cook who was perceived as God according to Hawaiian mythology has

captured the dynamics of othering of both invader and invaded, albeit this is often contested argument by the way Sahlin's historical take on white supremacy in relation to "primitive" natives (Obeyesekere 1992). The point is, however, that there are always such complex reactions of the researchers and the researched in the field.

During the fieldwork, one of our main purpose as researcher is to conduct "participant observation" which most of us take for granted because this is what we learn from textbook of anthropology. It did not take a while for me to realise the contradiction of this term of "participant observation". The classic image of an anthropologist (white man with shorts in my mind) taking note while observing his "people" by distancing himself in order to grasp objective reality of their culture was an academic fantasy which has been predominant in the field of anthropology. Participating and observing at the same time was somehow a psychological challenge. The more you participate, the more emotional you become. As Tim Ingold has advocated anthropology as "philosophy *with* people in" (1992:696) and anthropology "educates our perception of the world and opens our eyes and minds to other possibilities of being" (2008:82). In my own comprehension, this signifies metabolic symbiosis of our ontological and epistemological perception of the world. Studying "other" inevitably functions as a mirror for researchers; this hence is a paradoxically series of self-questioning. Speaking from my experience, my presence in the field deepened an understanding of myself; metaphorically it was a self-floating journey. There was something I always kept in my mind; before the departure, my supervisor Dr. Gygi told me my presence in the field would become something liminal. Trying not to influence my informants' lives but this was somehow inevitable. I thus often questioned myself.

One of the methodological tactics I employed was to activate Twitter account in order to interact and share information with my informants. Due to the clarification of my research purpose, I made it clear what I was doing on Twitter profile; studying *jōsei-muke* AVs, which has an unexpected twist during my field life. As being vocal of female sexual desire and consumption of pornography, I started to attain many public attentions. In other words, I was being *othered*. People started to ask me several questions of gender, sexuality, and sex education related issues such as how to make pornography educational or sometimes, how to get rid of their virginity. The first question might be understandable, while the latter was completely out of my knowledge. This sudden responsibility gave me confusion and struggle. Furthermore, I was even interviewed as a "porn scholar" of sociocultural significance of having friends with benefits by Japanese nation-wide weekly tabloid magazine (28th January 2019 Shukan SPA!). The editor once told me that there was always demand of young intellectual

women speaking of sex openly in public in a male consumer-oriented tabloid magazine. As Suzumi Suzuki, for instance, is a former AV actor with MA degree in sociology and now works as a spokeswoman in favor of sex positive feminism. Albeit the fact Suzuki discloses her misandric view, the irony is that her presence in mass media is consumed by *speculative* male gaze in Linda Williams' term: "the scientific instrument with which the man's analytic eye tries to penetrate the woman's body to see, as Irigaray notes, 'with speculative intent' - defeats this investigation, for inevitably it mirrors only the man himself." (1989:54). The irony thus is that her public visibility only functions to reproduce the patriarchal system of this speculative gaze to women. This system initially boosted my self-esteem; however, I could not mentally endure this weird speculative gaze from others. In the final couple months of the field work, my Twitter account thus had remained silent.

Another concern regarding to reflexivity in the field was my personal influence onto informants. The personal relationship between the researcher and the researched is often debatable; the argument of who "owns" superior/inferior knowledge and positions throughout interviews and discussions. Despite the fluidity of the power dynamics of the researcher-researched relationship has been often argued (Kulick and Willson 1995, Chen 2011, Narayan 1993), I would like to address the issue that is based on my personal experience. Gary Alan Fine (2003) has used the term "peopled ethnography" to suggest ethnography is more effective when it underlies "the observation of an interacting group, a setting in which one can explore the organized routine behaviour" (2003:41). The idea "peopled ethnography", as well as Ingold's pronounce of ethnography, suggests anthropological knowledge should be oriented to people we study. This is a light in confusion of "writing culture" argument (Clifford and Marcus 1986), the question of the power dynamics of the researcher and the researched. However, we also have to take into consideration that our everyday interactions are somehow inter-influential. It is often said that in-depth relationship with informants is a key to expanding our research experience; at the same time, our reactions, even a small nod would affect decisions of informants.

During the field year, I often spent time with a young woman, Arisa who self-identified fan of *jōsei-muke* AVs and was a new to the fandom. By the time meeting her, I was already in touch with a group of fans so asked her to join. We used to attend fan meeting events and go for drinks afterwards together with other fans. As a college student, Arisa was a virgin and never had a romantic experience with men. The nature of our assemblies shaped the conversation; most of time we talked about sex and men. It was obvious that Arisa felt uncomfortable as other women pushing her to get a boyfriend or a partner. When we were

alone, Arisa told me that she thought her virginity was shameful and considered working as a sex worker. Albeit I told her to think twice as a virgin experience was once in a lifetime, Arisa eventually stated working as a sex worker. Later she left college and work hard to pay her debt as at that time she was addicted to hosts. From time to time, I think of her and her different possible path as a normal college student. What if she had never joined our group, we, at least, I should have been more careful not to give her pressure; such thoughts often came to my mind. It is easy to say that her decision is her responsibility, which is undeniably true. The cruel part however is that I cannot remove a tiny sense of guilty as imagining my presence might have provoked a nuclear explosion. The inter-influential relationship of the researcher and the researched is always at presence as we *live* in the field. Despite researchers are to follow the research ethic guideline, the difficulty underlies our presence in the field. Then again, anthropological ethnography is a psychological journey which challenges our ontological and epistemological understanding of the world.

Erotic Subjectivity: Love in the Field

At last but not least, ethnographers' gender is also essential to be taken into consideration regarding its impact on their fieldwork journey. The erotic subjectivity of ethnographers discussed by Kulick and Willson (1995) is always at presence in the fields albeit sexual desire and attraction has been often a taboo and stigmatised in the methodology of ethnography. Researchers are expected to remain professional, objective, and ethical distance from the researched. The unspoken part of this however is that love and sex in the field often happens as fieldwork and is predominantly oriented to achieving "deep" connections with informants. As already said, there is continuous objectification from informants in the field as much as we researchers objectify them. Despite sex and love in the field is what we are told to avoid through the research ethic textbook, I would not deny such a thing as we are also human beings, social animals. The emotional and physical struggle of the researcher has been addressed by several scholars (Kloß 2017, Owton and Allen-Collison 2014, Lerum 2011). As an ethnographer in the field, it is sometimes difficult to draw an emotional line with informants. Yet it is crucial to understand that such a "deep" connection with informant could be a twist as it does affect a certain power dynamics and emotional flows. Regardless of our sentiment to research purposes, and however we present ourselves as a professional researcher, people we acquaint in the field do take us as just another human being. The question is if it is worth trying regardless of risks

around. During my field work, I happened to encounter with a situation where my research intention crushed with one of my informants' love interest.

Yuto was a young male employee of SOD and eventually became one of my main informants. We first met at fan meeting event of SILK LABO as he was assisting organising the event. As a new employee, Yuto was teased by other employees and told to hook up with me. For them teasing was an act of appreciation, although it seemed inherited by toxic masculine culture. He reacted so nervous and awkward but asked my number. I gave my business card just to form an interview with him. There then was an occasion where we met at Shinjuku and Yuto dressed up with costume that was used in SILK LABO films (later I found that it was set up by female staffs at SILK LABO in order him to be "polite" with me). Our interview went casual and last for two hours, which then he asked me to stay for dinner. I followed as my intention was "hungry" for field notes, ignoring his romantic intention. Nothing sexual happened on that night. We then kept in touch as I considered him as the main informant. Our causal meetings were held several times afterwards. We talked about AVs, sex industry, and other sex or gender-related issues and I intentionally avoided private talks and focused on research related subjects. So as herbivore men³⁴ in Japan, Yuto was shy and reserved but always generous and respectful. Several weeks after our first meeting, I saw him working at GIRL'S CH's talk event. Yuto looked busy so we just exchanged bows. Yuto was again teased by his male coworkers as his herbivore nature was contrasted to male porn actors' overly sexualised figures. The moment one of male porn actors called him out as a *doutei*, or virgin, Yuto blushed for shame and turned his face to me very awkwardly. I did not know how to react to it, so just turn my face down. It felt exceedingly awkward so I left the place after the event without saying anything to him. Later at the night, he texted me with confession of his crush on me. I turned down his offer with a sense of awkwardness and we did not speak after for a long time. Despite of the fact that Yuto and I eventually mended our relationship and he became a friend of mine, I would not deny that my initial intention of meeting him was research-related. In despite of this, his reaction revealed that the nature of my presence as an erotic subjectivity in the field. Simultaneously, it also demonstrates that ethnography, to some extent, is an "emotional labour": "labour requires one to induce or suppress feeling in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others" (Hochschild 1983:7) on a basis of erotic capital of a researcher. Erotic capital is "a combination of aesthetic, visual, physical,

³⁴ The term signifies men who are not vigorous in sex and find small happiness just sitting next to his crush. (Deacon 2013).

social, and sexual attractiveness to other members of your society, and especially to members of the opposite sex, in all social contexts” (Hakim 2011: 501). The point here is that I have become a part of a whole dialogue of erotic subjectivity whilst examining one (such as *eromen* /*lovemen*, and female fans).

As a female researcher studying a pornography-related subject, it is not undeniable of the presence of a certain difficulty. Porn studies; interdisciplinary study of pornography is fairly new academic field. Owing to great scholars such as Linda Williams, Feona Attwood, and Clarissa Smith, there is increasing recognition for porn studies. However, the discussion of pornography is still stigmatised and controversial. Attwood and Smith in the introduction of the first edition of *Porn Studies Journal* spoke, “(as reactions to the launch of the journal) [t]here were, of course, attempts to poke fun at the silliness of academic investigations of pornography in keeping with the perennial accusations of the superficiality of media studies, as well as more negative coverage questioning the need for a publication of this kind” (2014:1). Studying pornography, regardless of researchers’ intentions, could be contested as some people see no value of it. Or there are some unsophisticated people get tingled by the fact there is a woman studying pornography. While there is an increasing academic/public attention to female consumption of sex-related materials in relation to uprising sex positive feminists’ discourse, I urge to claim that there is a still ontological struggle for women studying, talking about sex openly in public. Sexual harassment, humiliation, and “sexting” to my social media accounts came as a package as if those were granted. There are several times when I was offered to be naked in front of screen, to be a woman for hire, and to have a casual sex by strangers. Those men with a mindset of “woman who talks about porn must be easygoing” are disgusting, without any argument. This on the other hand disclosed the patriarchal reality of the world where we live in, which somehow empowered me and encouraged to continue my study. The caution for sexual harassment in the field work has been also pointed out by several academics (Kloß 2017, Hanson and Richards 2019), with emphasis on the necessity of better education and supports in academic community. My experience, is no exception at all, and would have been worse without supports from my supervisor Dr. Gygi and PhD colleagues, as well as my family and friends. Nonetheless, I strongly feel that it is essential to express my sentiment of caution for any women carrying out their research on sex-related topics in the future.

Conclusion

The chapter has discussed methodological challenges. Firstly, it attempted to introduce a possible methodological framework for this research by addressing previous literature on media effect theories and ethnographic studies of audience. Following to discussions around pornography (especially focusing on feminists' critiques), there have been many attempts to capture the reception of pornography with a premise that pornographic representation corresponds with sociocultural understandings of gender and sexuality. As shown however, searching "audience" in a sense of active consumers as an academic research subject often faced difficulties due to the nature of consumption of pornography. This then led to examine audience reception studies, in order to find methodological solutions for this research.

Media effects have been a crucial theme for those who are concern by their sociocultural impact. From the Frankfurt school which saw mass media as a powerful vehicle of a certain ideology to the liberal-pluralists' celebration of mass media as a means for diversity, there were many academic traditions for addressing the relationship between mass media and people. In contrast to those metaphysical theories, cultural studies applied ethnographic studies in searching for how people actually interpret specific media materials, inheriting Hall's encoding/decoding models.

Cultural studies' application of ethnographic study has also influenced anthropological interests in mass media, which then raised anthropology of media that has been attempting to conduct people-oriented research on mass media practice. At the same time, there is increasing necessity of considering the term "audience" which was problematised by Hughes (2011) due to its nature of fluidity. Thus, rather than looking at reception of arbitrary audience, anthropology of media should be looking at how people use mass media, how they talk about different representation, and how they engage with the whole mass media practice in their daily lives. Due to the technological innovations such as Web 2.0, people are no more considered as just audience but they also post, share, and like contexts according to their needs and interests. The idea of "polymedia" by Miller (2012) indicates the necessity of studying various mass media practice according to different individual experiences. It is thus important for researchers to look at not only online interactions but also how people engage with them in their off line lives.

By looking at the historical development of media effect theories and the current issues underlying anthropology of media, I employed fan studies by Henry Jenkins (1999) as a solution. This is also due to the existing fandom culture for *jōsei-muke* AVs. Fans in Jenkins

(1999) are self-identified compared to any other mass media consumers and enthusiastic to particular mass media contexts, which differentiate them from audience. Being fan is a huge part of their identity and they are also critics, and often creators of their own meaning of specific media materials. In addition to that, due to its nature of informality, fan culture is democratic and diverse so that any degree of participant can exist. In this respect, fan studies is the methodological framework for my field work.

The chapter then demonstrated the details of my fieldwork. By focusing on *jōsei-muke* AVs and a series of fan meeting events organised by SOD, I have also examined other *jōsei-muke* adult industry as well as mass media coverages in order to capture its dynamics within contemporary Japanese society. I have then shown biographic data of the research participants and ethical considerations of the research. Which then followed by the discussions of issues around ethnography in relation to my own positionality and reflexivity in the field. I have conducted my field work in Tokyo where my home town is. In this sense, I am a “native anthropologist”; however, due to my initial innocence to the fandom I argue there is no significant difference in studying “other”, following Narayan’s argument (1993). Despite of advantages of being fluent in language and cultural nuances. What is important here is that, as Kondo (1986) has noted, to be opened and ready for any unexpected events during the fieldwork. Ethnography is fundamentally a study of encountering with others.

Following this, the chapter has elaborated this relationship between the self and the other, with reference to my own experience in the field. The relationship of the researcher and the researched is mutually influential and also sometimes power differential. My field work was only a year event, however, my own personal relationship with some of informants still remained. Insofar as the researcher objectifies the researched, the researcher is also constantly “othered” or “objectified” by the researched. I would thus like to emphasise that anthropological ethnography is a psychological journey that challenges ontological and epistemological perspectives of the world. Echoing with such a dynamic relationship between the researcher and the researched, it is also important to acknowledge of issues around gender and sexuality. Romantic expectations, and sometimes sexual harassments are not uncommon during fieldwork as it premises “deep” connections with informants, in spite of a researcher’s intention to remain professional. Especially my research subject was about pornography, I have received many unpleasant comments from those whom I have encountered not only in the field but also academia. The research which involves in gender and sexuality has been increasing, which I believe magnificent; however, it is also crucial to discuss gendered issues in the field work by educating and supporting each other in and out academia.

Chapter 1 and 2 has dedicated to provide backgrounds of my research. From the next chapter, I will discuss *jōsei-muke* AVs and its fandom with main questions: what is female friendly pornography in Japan? what kind of fans do it engage, who is watching it, and why?

Chapter 3 The Adult Video Industry in Japan

Introduction

“I liked to visit *pink film* cinemas often. But you can’t touch your little boy in cinema because of people around you. So that, I used to dream of masturbating in front of pornographic motion pictures, without any concern.” (Toru Muranishi in Nakamura 2015:13)

When the Netflix drama series *The Naked Director* (Zenra Kantoku, directed by Masaharu Take, Netflix) was released in August 2019, it became sensational and successfully received in Japan (Matsutani 2019 August 18th). Although it was fictionally adjusted for entertainment reasons, the series was based on Nobuhiro Motonishi’s book in 2016 about Tōru Muranishi who was an AV director and entrepreneur during the 1980s and also known as the “Emperor of the AV industry” due to his legendary and revolutionary camera works. Tracing back his early career from selling illicit magazines to entering incipient the AV industry, the series highlights and admittedly over glorifies Muranishi himself surviving the tumultuous years of the adult industry during the late 1980s³⁵ as well as demonstrating a historical turning point of the porn industry in Japan.

This chapter will discuss the AV industry in Japan by focusing on how it has developed and what changes were brought by its emergence, which will be followed by a description of the hierarchal systems of AV actors and social stigmas around the AV industry such as forced labour and non-consensual contracts. Accompanying series of interview with those who engage in the AV industry in the past and the present, the aim of this chapter is to illustrate a picture of the whole AV industry in order to examine backgrounds for the emergence of *jōsei-muke* AVs.

AV is the current synonym of pornography in Japan, whose name is originated from its initial format as VHS video. AV has established an archetype of Japanese pornography in productions, exhibitions, distributions, and consumption as low-budget videos of intimate sex scenes that are privately watched. AV was emerged with the technological development of home-use video decks. AV focused more on actual, documentary style of intimate sex scenes

³⁵ The second series was released in 2021.

rather than juxtaposing sex scenes into narratives as in the way of *pink films*. This new shooting technique deliver a twist in the pre-existing *pink film* industry and started to break the taboo of *honban-koui*, unstimulated sex, or more straightforwardly real penile-genital penetration. *Honban-koui* was in the beginning regarded as lowbrow performance which only low-class female actors were required to do, despite it eventually became common in almost every AVs. This escalation to the explicit sexual expression was believed to the result from illicit uncensored pornographic magazines. Albeit genitals must be censored with pixelisation and any penile-genital penetration for sale is banned by the Japanese obscenity law, pixelated *honban-koui* on screen was untouched due to its legal ambiguity.

Simultaneously, the AV industry then became a huge market due to its popularity as well as the spread of rental video shops, which made the industry profit-making business. Corresponding with the pre-existing popularity with illicit uncensored materials, it was thus often rumoured that the industry was closely linked to organised crime groups such as yakuza. However, there were attempts to create incorporated based production companies such SOD, the focus of this research. These incorporated production companies (SOD, DMM, and PRESIGE in Nakamura 2015) organises their business in the same way as other companies, which then eventually became three monopolistic productions of the current state.

The section then looks at AV actors with a focus on female actors (as the main discussions of male AV actors would be the next chapter), by introducing two former AV actors' stories who joined the industry at different era of the AV industry. One case in 20 years ago will show the wide-spread stereotypes of female AV actor joining the industry for financial needs, while another, more contemporary case will indicate how quickly the status of AV actors are changed. As Suzumi Suzuki has noted that the way those female AV actors are showcased is strictly hierarchical. Most female actors begin their career with an exclusive contract for a limited amount of time, only if she had an advantageous appearance. Renewal of those contracts is quite rare so that most actors became a freelance so that they have to put efforts to achieve each contact per titles. The estimated number of female AV actors is approximately 10,000, and majority of them working as nameless female figures while only 20 % of them were successful.

In 2004, there were two malicious criminal case in the AV industry which created a mass panic to Japanese society as well as provoke academic and civic actions for protecting human rights of AV actors. As both cases involve non-consensual forced labour in cruel violent sex, scholars who concerned violation of human rights in pornography formed Anti-Pornography and Prostitution Research Group (in short, AAP) was formed in 1999 and later People Against Pornography and Sexual Violence (PAPS) as a consultation party. Simultaneously, the report

and the request by Human Right Now in 2016 demanded to establish a third party (AV Human Right and Ethic Organisation in 2017) to monitor the industry. In 2022, the new law that protects withdrawal rights of AV actors was implemented. However, this law does not capture the increasing popularity of underground AVs sold online in foreign websites; rather, there are also concerns for financial loss of those who work in the AV industry.

In the last decade, the whole AV industry in Japan has suffered from tremendous popularity of Porn 2.0 (Jenkins 2007) which is user-generated streaming pornographic video sites such as *xvideos*, *Pornhubs*, and *xHamster*. The difficulty of the domestic industry underlies with Japanese obscenity law which enforces pixelisation on genitals, where those Porn 2.0 websites offers uncensored pornography all the time. The big AV production companies like SOD, therefore, put on emphasis on idolisation of female AV actors by increasing opportunities of fan meetings to invest emotional intimacy with fans.

Adult Videos: Seeking for “Real” Sex

While having cocktails on our hands at a rooftop bar in the middle of Shinjuku, Yuto, a young SOD employee, explained me about the industry which he was in. Yuto told me, “The main feature of AV is *honban-koui* (actual penile-genital penetrations), which does not happen in other commercial films”. “But it’s pixelated”, I asked and Yuto continued, “I know. It’s just an old custom in the industry and incomprehensive legal obligations. Officially or legally, we are not supposed to shoot any *honban-koui*, even though it is common. So, we have an editorial team in the company which specialises in putting pixies on genitals. But all my friends ask me to get copies of uncensored DVDs. In the end, we all want to see that! It does not make sense to see AVs with pixels on genitals, especially when we have access to foreign porn websites with a full of non-pixelated porn”, while him laughing. The key points that has been raised by Yuto here is a significant characteristic of AVs as a form and pornographic representation that is different from *pink films* (see Chapter 1). Especially in regards to “an old custom in the industry” of *honban-koui*. In order to understand these points, this section will look at the origin of AVs and how representation of sex has changed due to this new technology.

The industrial change of pornography from *pink films* to AVs resulted from the spread of home-use video decks. In 1978, it was only used by 1.3% of Japanese population; however, by the 1986 a half of the whole Japanese households had one³⁶. The term AVs is originated by the fact that it was produced with home-use video cameras, not with professional shooting

³⁶ *Sayounara! Nikkatsu Roman Poruno* (Goodbye! *Nikkatsu Roman Porn*) (1988 April 15th) [Asashi Shibum]

settings. Yet it might too easy to argue that the new technology of VHS changed the consumption of pornography. Following the traditional anti-technological determinism inherited from Raymond Williams (1975), however, the idea of new technology altering our behaviour is a result from social needs. The point here is that our desire should pre-exist before the technological change. Hypothetically, in this specific context of consumption of pornography in Japan, it might be conceivable that desire for something cheaper and visually explicit materials were needed; so that it led to the popularisation of AVs.

The significant difference of AVs from *pink films*, driven from its shooting technique and low budgets, is that AVs focus on sex scenes featuring documentary style, *nama dori* or gonzo style so to say. By situating sex scene as climax, it highlights primary erotic acts such as interviews, cosplays, and masturbations of female AV actors in order to put an emphasis on their personas. Conventionally, it often features a young, innocent, and self-identified non-experienced girl who is willing to explore her sexuality and eventually finds sexual pleasure with help of anonymous male actor, described as salvage ideology by Wong and Yau in 2018. Although Wong and Yau has argued that salvage ideology is common in the post war Japanese pornographic industry including *Pink films*; however, the significance of AVs which provides much more intimate situational nexus of media and audience than cinematic setting has contributed the acceleration of this salvage ideology. Fujiki (2009) has noted, whilst *pink film* provides gradual sexual allure, AVs have more direct causal relationship between viewer and contents. It is thus arguable that AVs have delivered intensive intimate bodily sensory situations with audience and visual materials, which have contributed to wider industrial change of pornographic media in Japan.

Honban-koui, or real penile-genital penetration was sensational, provocative, and legally controversial at that time. Although *pink films* were regarded as Japanese “pornographic” films, *honban-koui* was not common; moreover, genitals even including pubic hair were censored with pixelisation, and actors often covered their private parts with taping (*mae-bari* which literally means sticking the front). As an official discourse, porn stars are paid for their performance, not for penile-genital penetration. As long as the content was censored with pixelisation, it therefore would not be charged for obscenity³⁷. *Honban-koui* in AVs was also regarded as lowbrow acts equivalent to BDSM (bondage, discipline, and sadomasochism) and

³⁷ *Honban-koui ga Dame data to ha...* “AV Gyoukai ni Gekishin...Tsugitsugi to Akiraka ninaru Akushitsusatsuei (“I did not know *honban-koui* was prohibited...” Revealed malicious misconducts in shooting). 2016 June 25th. Sankei Biz. Available at: <https://www.sankeibiz.jp/compliance/news/160625/cpb1606251714001-n1.htm> [Accessed 19 April 2022].

scatology, which only ugly or low-class AV actors were offered to do so (Fujiki 2009). On the other hand, it was common to use *mae-bari* for good looking or high-class AV actors for the reason that they were considered to be promoted for the mainstream entertainment after their career in the AV industry. In addition to that, those who considered to be high-class actresses were encouraged to speak up in mass media about their innocence of *honban-koui*. Female figures on mainstream mass media should be expectedly pure, innocent, and naïve, whilst only few “lowbrow” female AV actors were expected to go to extremes. Such a classification of AV actors, I argue, reflects the changing standards of male desire for women. Wife or girlfriend-like figures were expected to sustain “clean” images, while others, so to say, mistress-like figures were expected to be overly sexual.

However, the releases of *Miss Honban Yumiko 19 years old* in 1983 by Cosmos Plan Yumiko Tadokoro, who was beautiful enough to be ranked as high-class actress, performing *honban-koui* shocked the whole AV industry. Fujiki (2009) has argued that escalation from soft to hard core – from fake penile-genital penetration to *honban-koui* – has been pushed up by the popularity of illicit products in underground market such as uncensored pornographic magazines. Followingly, Crystal Eizo which was established by Tadahiro Nishimura in 1984, inviting Tōru Muranishi as a director, found out that the depiction of *honban-koui*, even if it were displayed in a small dusty room, could be a money shot. depiction of *honban-koui*, even if it were displayed in a small dusty room, could be a money shot. In 1985, his gonzo SM (Sade-Masochism) title featuring Hitomi Tachikawa *Chijoku no Onna (Disgraced Woman)* ranked the best title in *Video World*, an AV industrial journal, leaving other titles by major companies behind. During that time, Muranishi has established his iconic shooting styles, *Bukkake*³⁸ and *Ekiben*³⁹, which is now known as porn slangs internationally. In addition to that, he also entered screen as an actor only with a white brief to have sex with a female actress, which made him known as “the emperor of *Hamedori* (POV: Point of View, where the man who having sex holds camera himself and focus on penile-genital penetration)” (Furusawa 2021).

Simultaneously, the growing number of rental video shops in 1984 influenced the distribution structure of AVs⁴⁰. The rapid growth of numbers of rental video shops boosted the

³⁸ “Facial” which a man ejaculates semen onto the face of woman. It was installed to display “real” presence of phallic pleasure in order to remove any doubt from the pixelization of genitals. However, it is strongly not recommended for real sexual intercourse due to the potential risk of infections and ablepsia.

³⁹ Sex position where a man carries woman while standing up. *Eki* means station and *ben* is a short term for a bento such as a lunchbox because it looks like a man selling bento at station. Again, this is not recommended for real sexual intercourse due to the potential risk for back pain for a man.

⁴⁰ Before the popularity of rental video shops, mail-order business was the main distribution system.

AV industry. Unlike the business to customer model where sales' estimations were fluid and uncertain, wholesaling to rental video shops was more reasonable and guaranteed stable distribution of large amounts of products. There were already 5,000 rental video shops across Japan in 1986⁴¹. During the late 1980s, average fixed price per video was 1,5000 JPY⁴² and wholesale price as minus 60% of fixed price was 9000 JPY⁴³ (Nakamura 2015). Approximately estimated, 2000 videos per month by new 8 titles would be 14.4 million JPY⁴⁴ sales volumes. Even though it would subtract production fees which was often around 3 million JPY⁴⁵ including performance fees of actors, that meant 12 million JPY⁴⁶ as gross profit per month. It was literally a huge money-making business. This is assumingly the reason for the industry's association with yakuza and other organised criminal groups.

Note that however, the research site SOD was established in 1995 by Ganari Takahashi a former television producer, organising an AV production company as in the same way with other incorporated companies, despite of the industry's illicit stereotype. SOD has become a company that advertises themselves on career forums, which newly graduates are queuing up for applications every year. The merit of this highly-organised industry is that they are highly aware of compliances such as workers' rights. Certainly, there are still many small independent AV studios in Japan; The issues of forced labour, underaged porn, and lack of consent is still highly problematic and becomes more complicated due to the increasing popularity of *kosatsu* (private shooting) AVs which is often produced without consent and sold online streaming websites which servers are not in Japan. Followingly, I will discuss about AV actors in regards to how they start their career and what kinds of career steps they take.

AV actors

It was a fortunate occasion. A friend of mine, a drag artist set me up an interview with a former AV actor, Juri who started her career in the 1990s when the AV industry was at its highest. While I was sitting and smoking at the bar with a friend of mine in drag, in Shinjuku Ni-chome, the biggest gay town in Tokyo, Juri came a bit later than meeting time.

⁴¹ *Bideô ha Niken ni Ichidai, Gonen-gô ha 100% tô, Gyoukai Tsuyoki (A Video Deck per Two Households, estimating 100% in Five years, Firmly the Industry Speaks)*, 1987 February 17th. Mainichi News Paper.

⁴² 93.75 GBP (1GBP=160JPY)

⁴³ 56.25 GBP (ibid.)

⁴⁴ 87.5k GBP (ibid.)

⁴⁵ 18.75k GBP (ibid.)

⁴⁶ 75k GBP (ibid.)

Juri was over 40s but looked very seductive with her brown curly hair and flowers printed tight skirt. She looked confident but it was not intimidating at all. She smiled at me and started talking without me asking specific question, as she seemed used to interviews.

“When I started my career in the industry more than 20 years ago, I earned so much money, so much more than you can think of. I needed some money for my ex-husband’s debt. He was a terrible person, but I was so in love with him. The industry was so energetic, full of money going around. There were many iconic stars from AV who became nationwide celebrities, like Kuroki-san and Iijima-san⁴⁷. Yeah, there was ‘dream’ in the industry. I quit after paying everything off but returned to the industry a couple years ago because I needed money for a new business plan. Right now, it went down less than a half of that of the first time. Very disappointing. Back then, most women entered AV industry just because they needed money, including me. But now I feel that most young women in the industry, they start because of in-need of feeling their own attractions to fulfil self-esteem. I often wonder what is wrong with young people these days.”

As I was surprised by her smooth monologue, she continued that her on-going business plan was to provide supports for those female AV actors after retirement. Some time has passed, and then she left the bar with a man. Despite of the way Juri spoke gave me a strong impression of nostalgia or wistful for the golden age of AV industry, it also reminded me of the wide-spread rumours that most female AV actors joined the industry in need for money. Which is, in Juri’s case for her “terrible” ex-husband. Another major doorway to the industry was scouting on the street of Tokyo. Despite of the fact that it is prohibited by state regulation of Tokyo Metropolitan, it is not unusual to see scout men for AVs or other sex industry scattered around bustling places such as Shibuya and Shinjuku. When a young woman walking alone, those scout men often approach her and ask if she is interested in “entertainment industry”. This coincidentally happened to me during a fieldwork. When I was walking alone to Shinjuku station after the SOD event, a man came up to me out of the blue and asked, “You look good. Are you interested in modeling?”. As immediately noticed that it was a form of scout, I stopped and listened to what he could possibly offer, needless to say, without telling him that I was a

⁴⁷ Kaoru Kuroki was a female AV actor who then become successful on nation-wide TV shows due to her intellectual speech on positive attitudes for sex. Ai Iijima, also an female AV actor was best-known for her appearance as media personalitis on TV and autobiography, *Platonic Sex* published in 2000.

researcher. The man eventually told me that if I would be willing to take off “some clothes” in front of camera, I could make a lot of money and possibly be a TV star. I asked him that how far I should take off “some clothes”. He smiled at me and said, “As far as you can go”. When I told him that I would think about it, he handed me his business card and told me to contact him anytime. Later, when I checked his production company on Internet and there was little information; which somehow convinced my intuition that the man was an AV scout man. What would happen if I followed?

According to Suzumi Suzuki (2013), a former female AV actor and now a journalist who actually has followed a scout man, in most cases young women appeared an interview and that was where they know details of the job. Suzuki has portrayed that most women start their career as *tantai* (*tan* as single and *tai* is body). This is a category of status quo of AV actors. *Tantai* signifies AV actor who has an exclusive contract with a specific production company. *Tantai* actors are to perform one video per month during their contract period and to receive earnings for that. *Tantai* video features one AV actor for 120 to 180 minutes, with emphasising on her cuteness, innocence, and beautiful body of silky skin, breasts, and buttocks (Nakamura 2012 and Wong and Yau 2018). *Tantai* is considered to be the top status of AV actor, and they earn from 1 to 2.5 million JPY⁴⁸ per video; however, this price is that production pays to agent so that the real amount that AV actors receives is less than that (Nakamura 2012). In most cases, *tantai* contracts do not last long. It is normally 6 months, 12 months at most, and 3 months at least (Suzuki 2013). Therefore, AV actors with long lasting exclusive contracts are the best of the best. Some of them managed to transition their stage to the mainstream television such as Kaoru Kuroki, Ai Iijima and Mana Sakura.

Majority of *tantai* actors, after their limited amount of time of exclusive contracts, they would be categorised as *kikaku* (literally as “project”) actors. Their job is to perform as a certain female character in sexual fantasies or dramas (Wong and Yau 2018, Nakamura 2012) such as MILF (mother I like to f**k), nurses and schoolteachers. Some of them have no stage name as in the same way as *tantai* AV actors do. According to Nakamura (2012), 80 to 90 % of the entire population of female AV actors belong to this *kikaku* category. The advantage of having no exclusive contracts with production companies is that they have no limit of works per months; which means, they, as freelancers, could earn more than *tantai* AV actors. Suzuki (2013) has argued that such neoliberal nature of *kikaku* encourages AV actors to commit to jobs despite of the fact that they had to invest themselves harder to achieve contracts every

⁴⁸ 6250 to 15,625 GBP (1GBP=160JPY)

month. If *kikaku* actors become popular as *tantai*, they would be categorised as *kikatan* (a coined word of *kikaku* and *tantai*). *Kikatan* actors have performance contracts per title as *kikaku*; however, their stage name would be featured as in the same way with *tantai*. Yui Hatano, Saki Hatsumi and Ai Uehara are popular *kikatan* actors and also work as idols or television personalities.

The hierarchy of female AV actors demonstrates that its nature of popularity-driven industry that is highly neo-liberal and hard to survive, as it is demonstrated in Takeyama's ethnography on host club (2010, 2016), It is also estimated that while there are more than 10,000 active female AV actors, while only around 70 male AV actors working as freelancers (Mizuno 2014). This number is those who work as professional actors, there many nameless male figures who only provide semen. Although male AV actors' role has changed due to the emergence of *jōsei-muke* AVs – which will be discussed in the next chapter –this gendered system of the industry indicates that female figures are always centre of the camera attention but they are also displaceable unless having beauty or talent.

Regarding salary of female AV actors; while top *tantai* actors receive 1 to 2.5 million yen⁴⁹ per month, *kikatan* actors charge 300k to 800k JPY⁵⁰ per title. *Kikaku* actors without any stage name would earn 150k to 250k JPY⁵¹. Those numbers are fees which production companies pay as total. What those AV actors truly receive is depending on their contracts with agencies. In recent years, due to the stagnation of the whole AV industry resulting from free online contents, the salary of AV actors also synchronously decreased (Nakamura 2015). To get a sense of the current work environment in the AV industry, let me introduce another story of Mizuki who voluntarily has shared her time at the industry.

I was introduced to Mizuki who was accompanied with a friend of mine at an old, tiny, and dusty izakaya in the middle of Kabuki-cho. Mizuki in her mid twenties had short hair dyed silver and strong red eye shadow around her big round shaped eyes. With a big glass of beer on her right hand, she opened her mouth: "I'm so exhausted today, did four shows until just a moment ago". Soon I learned that Mizuki was working as a full-time stripper and asked why started and then quit the AV industry. She continued, "I just liked sex, you know. That's how I started, no education and no special skill. But I really enjoyed sex and still do. I did some AVs for a good amount of years, including *jōsei-muke* AVs. But you know, AVs is no good for making money, the industry is just hard to survive. I was *kikatan* and then, *kikaku*. Working

⁴⁹ 6250 to 15,625 GBP (1GBP=160JPY).

⁵⁰ 1,875 to 5000 GBP (ibid.).

⁵¹ 937.5 to 1,562.5 GBP (ibid.).

as a stripper is hard as well but I enjoy it". Mizuki also told me a story when she kept dancing with broken ribs at her show, while cheerfully making fun of herself. After a couple of drinks, the clock was already indicating a half past 23 pm. While my drunken friend was insisting on going to a karaoke club, Mizuki left for Shinjuku station alone, saying that she had to take a rest for tomorrow's shows. I could not stop being impressed by her professionalism all night.

Mizuki's story portrays a stereotypical career transition of female AV actors although her motive for working in the industry is different from Juri. The transition from an AV actor to a stripper took place only within three years. Regardless of her rich experience in the industry with professional attitudes, it is clear that the popularity and fame is the most important factor for working as female AV actor. Depending on numbers of *honban-koui* and other extreme acts such as anal penetration and SM scenes, their fee would differ. There are also female AV actors who only perform blowjobs and receive 30k to 50k JPY⁵² (Nakamura 2015). In addition to that, the social stigma around AV actors gives difficulties with finding non-sex related job, for someone like Mizuki. While she seems happy with her decision, poor working conditions at strip club should not be ignored and it is not a job which one can pursue for life-long time. The decline of AV actors' salary and also the social stigmas around their job make difficult for preexisting and former AV actors to survive not only in the industry per se but also outside of it. So, what is at stake for the industry and what are they attempting in order to survive?

Reformation of the Industry

The big corporate companies such as SOD, and other two monopolistic production companies, DMM and PRESIGE (Nakamura 2015) attempted to organise their business in the same way with other major industries (e.g. integrity in workers' contracts), it is not yet deniable that there are social stigmas around the AV industry, namely scouting and forced labour.

From 1986 to 1999, there have been twenty-seven cases where underage girls being scouted on streets, deceived, and forced to perform on AVs. As 15 years old as youngest and mostly age from 15 to 22 girls were targeted by "scout men", or pimps. In 1991, there was a case revealed that one scout man reached to 5,800 women on streets and succeeded to employ 600 of them which 30 of them became AV actors⁵³. In many cases, pimps are prosecuted for violation of Employment Security Law and Worker Dispatch Law and if it is involved with underage girls, Juvenile Protection Ordinance would be charged as well. The infamous incident

⁵² 187.5 to 312.5 GBP (1GBP=160JPY).

⁵³ *Adult Video ni Shōjō wo Kanyū Tokyo (Inducing Underaged Women to Adult Video, Tokyo)*, 1991 May 18th. Asahi Newspaper.

was deceiving underage girls who believed themselves auditioning for “modelling” into performing sex on the screen without contraceptives, and – it is even hard to describe – sometimes they were forced to perform violent BDSM scenes. These contents were sold with a title of *Kansai Enko* series (Compensated Dating⁵⁴ in Kansai region) which consisted of 157 volumes. These malicious videos were discovered in 2004 and the principle offender was arrested in the following year. As the principle offender, a 41 years old contract worker in Japan Railways at that time, stated in the court “the younger the more popular it was”, the youngest victims were 10 years old (Nakasatomi 2007). This is undoubtedly the exploitation of underage girls which abuse their innocence and carelessness. Child pornography laws were made stricter in 2014, however, it is important to remember that exploitation often has happened to adult women.

Another shocking incident in the industry was infamously known as *Bakky Incident*. In 2004, an AV production company Bakky Visual Planning which specialised in violent pornography was exposed by the police for forced indecency causing injury. The female actor suffered from rectal perforation and anal fissure which took 4 months for recovery. In the video titled *Sex on the Drug*, female actor was drugged and raped by 20 men while being unconscious. Later she reported to the police, which then discovered other malicious contents produced by the company. In the series of *Mizu Jigoku* (Water Hell), a female actor was forced to receive violent acts which involved water; such as sunk in a swimming pool, put in a box and then filled with water, and hung up-side-down and lowered into a bucketful water, which all cause her suffocation nearly to death. The female actor then injured while raped in a bathroom, which later she confessed it was “a blessing in disguise” (Nakasatomi 2007:86) because it stopped the shooting. She was then forced to live in a wheelchair and has a water phobia after then. The third case was a series of *Mondou Muyou Kyousei Shikyū-houkai* (No Argument, Forced Breaking Uterus) with around 20 volumes. Each title consists of featuring one female actor who was forced to get raped as well as to receive brutal violence by dozens of men as much of them were beyond imagination; such as burning pubic hair, forcing drinking alcohol and those using water as above. Prior to the shootings, these female actors were informed with fake information of “pseudo -violence”, and once they signed the contract the whole violence started. These all left female actors with severe injuries as well as mental trauma. Undoubtedly, it is nothing but cruel and outrageous assaults towards women. The principle offender and

⁵⁴ *Enjo kōsai*, or compensated dating often signifies underage prostitution. The term became a social problem during 1990s which led Child Pornography Law in 1996 and Regulation for Online Dating in 2003. However, the term was replaced by *papa-katsu* (Papa activity) and issues around child prostitution still exist.

representative of the company was sentenced for 18 years in jail on a basis of the three cases above. There must be however more female victims as *Mondou Muyou Kyousei Shikyū-houkai* itself has around 20 volumes. However, these videos remained in the market – even available on Amazon⁵⁵ – by the company Collector which inherited distribution rights of Bakky Visual Planning. Moreover, male figures who involved those outrageous crimes and actually were recruited from fans of Bakky’s products were not prosecuted.

These porn crime cases above provoke academic and public interests, scholars such as Nakasatomi (2007) and Morita (2021) saw these violent crimes were inheriting the ethos of Baksheesh Yamashita’s violent AVs which was over-celebrated by intellectuals (see Chapter 1). Anti-Pornography and Prostitution Research Group (in short, AAP) was formed in 1999 and later People Against Pornography and Sexual Violence (currently known as PAPS) was established in 2009 as auxiliary organisation for providing consultation services for survivors and victims of sexual violence cause by pornography⁵⁶. Following to those violent case in pornography, Hiroshi Nakasatomi (2007), a leading figure of AAP and PAPS has claimed for new legal implementation to prevent sexual violence and forced labour in porn production in Japan, referring to the *Anti-Pornography Civil Rights Ordinance* in 1983 (Dworkin and MacKinnon, see Chapter 1) and *R vs Butler* in Canada in 1992 which decided the obscenity⁵⁷ as violation of human rights and thus implemented state censorship. Nakasatomi believed that the discussion of pornography should center around human rights rather than freedom of expression and the definition of obscenity. On the note that *R vs Butler* is often considered a loss for sexual minorities (Segal 2016), Nakasatomi has argued that the police control over homosexual or feminists’ materials are preexisted before the decision and hence the implementation of *R vs Butler* must be carried out more practically.

Similarly, and more precisely, *The Report on Violation of Human Right in AV industry* which was published in 2016 by Human Rights Now, an international human rights NGO based in Tokyo, attempted to bring attentions to female exploitation in the AV industry. The report consists of PAPS’s consultations with victims those who was deceived to perform in AVs and pointed out sloppy facts of employment contracts and the lack of consent forms. Based on the report, Human Rights Now handed a request letter to the AV industry association which conveys request for establishing a third party in order to prevent forced labour. AV Human

⁵⁵ At the time of January 16th 2023.

⁵⁶ To be precise, AAP and PAPS has emerged as critiques of Baksheesh Yamashita’s violent AVs (see chapter 1) and Yamashita’s association with sex education for adolescents.

⁵⁷ The idea of obscenity here signifies 1) expression of violent sex and 2) explicit sexual expression without violence but the treatment of actors is dehumanizing or degrading.

Right and Ethic Organisation was thus formed in 2017 in order to play as a third party. For instance, the procedure of works, especially for AV actors became transparent with high integrity. Performers have now the right to halt sales, rentals and online videos so that their performance would not haunt them for the rest of their lives.

These accusations of the AV industry have triggered a mass panic in the industry. Those who had been already in the industry voiced their opinions on the report. Mana Sakura, an AV actor and media personality spoke from her experience that there was no “forcing” in her experience, rather people in the industry checked on her wellbeing as many times as possible⁵⁸. Similar voices were also heard from other AV actors on active. However, the issues on misconducts in the industry should not be dismissed by a few cases in the big corporate company (Sakura has an exclusive contract with SOD). While three production companies, SOD, DMM, and PRESIGE exercise legal integrity in their business, it should not be forgotten that there are innumerable amounts of small independent companies which cause problems.

The new regulation law, *AV Shutsuen Higai Boushi · Kyûsai hō* (Prevention and Relief from Damage caused by AV Appearance) was then implemented in 2022 to assure workers’ rights. The production, exhibition, and distribution of AVs is now to be well-consulted with each AV actors. In this new law the actual shootings of AV should be a month ahead from agreement with actors, allowing actors to decide carefully whether they really wish to perform. The release of the material should be 4 months after the shooting. Simultaneously, actors can withdrawal from the contract without any compensation for one year from the release of the material. The materials which go through all these procedures will be labelled as *Tekisei* AV (Appropriate AV) and thus sold in the market.

The problem of this legal implementation, however, causes many problems in practice. For instance, there can be no replacement of actors, which would be a huge financial loss for production companies as they have to cancel many factors for shooting. Even though *Tekisei* AV is sold in the market, payment for all the staffs would be 7 months after the shooting. The new law thus is often criticised for “too much focusing on victims” and structurally harming for existing actors in the industry. So that, there are concerns for growing illegal AVs such as *kosatsu* (private shooting) which often involves illegal activities of interceptions and forced labours.

⁵⁸ Sakura Mana, Jittai-ken majie AV Shutsuen Kyōyō Mondai Kataru (Mana Sakura Speaking of Forced Labour in AV from Her Experience), 2017 February 10, *Excite News*. Available at: https://www.excite.co.jp/news/article/Narinari_20170210_42238/ [Accessed 21 January 2023].

Note that however, my field work the year of 2018 to 2019 was a prior to the new legal implementations. There was therefore monthly release of new products. In addition to the production of AVs, companies like SOD has been attempting alternative marketing business models beyond contents which will be the following topic.

Beyond Contents

In the last decade, the AV industry is struggling with a tsunami wave of the popularity of tube sites such as *xvideos*, *Pornhub*, and *xHamster* where people can get streaming of pornographic videos without member registration unless they want to upload their own videos. These online sites are known as Porn 2.0 with reference to Web 2.0 which signifies the predominance of user-generated content website (Jenkins 2007). As those sites' servers are based outside of Japan, Japanese legal system does not apply. Therefore, un-pixelated AVs are all over the place and there is only superficial age restriction⁵⁹. In theory, the article 175 restricts Japanese people to engage with un-pixelated adult contents by any forms; producing, distributing, and exhibiting. Besides, there were increasing numbers of *ura* video, illegal videos (as the term *ura* signifies literally “behind”) secretly from 1990s. These videos were primarily made for international distribution⁶⁰ mainly the United States; therefore, Japanese AVs without any pixelisation travelled abroad and gained world-wide popularity. There are tremendous amounts of Japanese AVs on those Porn 2.0 websites. The category of “Japanese” always ranks one of the most searched words on those websites, for instance as described in *Pornhub's 2021 Year in Review* (14th December 2021). This dynamic sift of platform change is still giving hard times for the licit AV industry.

In order to survive, it became common to see idolisation of AV actors. Again, AV actors on mainstream television programs is not something new as it has been already pioneered by some AV actors who became media personalities. In the same way idols are professionally created popular figures (Galbraith and Karlin 2012), AV actors could also become as TV stars and group performers on stage. Some of them have their own fan clubs in and outside of Japan such as Sora Aoi who has become an international celebrity among the cognoscenti (Wang 2018), while some AV actors are working in underpaid conditions (Nakamura 2012). Idols signifies a category of “highly produced and promoted singers, models, and media personalities”

⁵⁹ It depends on each country. In Japan, people just have to click “yes” to the bottom “Are you over 18?”, while in the UK, some provider have own adult contents filter, which people have to register with credit card to verify their access to porn sites.

⁶⁰ It is often said that some videos shops used to sell those *ura-keshi* videos for regular customers secretly.

(Galbraith and Karlin 2012:2). In contrast to professional models and actors, idols are often described as approachable figures. This category of idols itself has a history since 1970s. However, the significant difference since the emergence of AKB 48 in the mid 2000 is that fans are able to interact with idols more directly in special events such as hands shaking sessions and photo shootings, not only just attending live performances. The key concept of the AKB 48 marketing style is that fans support idols and take care of their growth as if fans are female idol's fathers or brothers. Although Yasunori Akimoto, the producer of AKB 48 was criticised for this marketing style as "reverse host club" (Shukan Shincho 2011 in Galbraith and Karlin 2012:2), this marketing model became influential for the idol culture in Japan. SOD also recruited this marketing model and "idolised" both male and female AV actors. As those AV actors with exclusive contracts (*tantai*), they are obliged to perform for one video per month and attend fan meeting events every month. As in the same way with AKB 48, the aim here is to develop strong emotional bonds with fans and spur feeling of emotional (at the same time financial) support from them. Not only fan meeting events, SOD opened a standing bar in Akihabara *SOD Jōshi Shain Sakaba* in 2018 where AV actors work as bartenders. As a second branch SOD opened a bar in Shin-Nakano, at the ground floor of SOD's company building, in which often they have male AV actors' day so that female fans can go to interact with them there. Besides, one in Shin-Nakano has rich food menu and offers a DVD video as souvenir per visit.

Yuto once explained to me: "To be honest with you, selling DVDs or online contents do not make a lot of profits. That's why we have to rely on fan meeting events. Our head of the company is also keen to employ AV actors as admin staffs after their retirement as performer. You know, there's always social stigma around AV actors". As Nakamura (2015) pointed out, AV industry has gone too far from the "content" itself. It is paradoxical; however, showcasing good looking AV actors or rich fetish genre are not enough. They have to serve fan's feelings in order to compete with Porn 2.0; thus, it might be able to say that AV industry has become a service industry. Simultaneously, Nakamura (2015) argued that the AV industry has two ways to survive, whether cultivate international market with promoting AVs as Japanese culture or female consumers by making *jōsei-muke* AVs. *jōsei-muke* AVs was emerged amid such an arduous situation.

Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the AV industry – from its difference from previous pornographic media *pink films* to the current issues around the industry in order to give a sense of the whole picture of the industry itself and in what context *jōsei-muke* AVs has emerged.

The emergence of AVs as a dominant pornographic media have changed its viewing style from theatre to private rooms due to the technological development. It has also changed its contents towards more “realistic” sex. Which then developed into the depiction of *honban-koui* despite of its legal ambiguity. I have also argued that *honban-koui* was considered as lowbrow acts practiced by low-class female actors while high-class actors were encouraged to speak of their innocence of *honban-koui*. Such a hierarchical difference within female actors I have argued, were reflection of male desire to classify women into two categories, innocent and chaste women and salacious women.

However, the contents of AVs became more and more explicit due to the nature of its popularity-driven industry and thus *honban-koui* became common in the industry. This was also influenced by illegal, or non-pixelated materials in the underground market. The popularity of the AVs also meant that it was very easy to make a profit so that it was often rumored of association with organised criminals such as *yakuza*,

SOD, founded by Ganari Takahashi in 1995 however, organised the company in the same way with other incorporated companies and hence became successful. Following that, the current situation of the AV industry is monopolised by three production companies, SOD, DMM, and PRESTIGE. While it became harder for new production to join the industry, the monopoly of those three contributed to the transparency in legal contracts with AV actors to clear off bad images of the industry. However, the recent tsunami of Porn 2.0 put more difficulties in the industry when it has become normalised to watch uncensored and free international pornography online.

In regards to AV actors, the chapter introduced two women who had worked in the industry as actors. Juri, who joined the industry more than 20 years ago for financial needs which her ex-husband caused. Juri also revealed that there was a hope for being a nation-wide celebrity, which was also a common tactic for scouting female actors on the street. The system of AV actors in the industry is however highly neo-liberal, while it is always in need of supply of female AV actors. The salary scale of *tantai*, *kikatan*, and *kikaku* is varied due to the nature of its popularity-driven job. Among the estimated numbers of female actors on active is 10,000 (Mizuno 2014), *tantai* and *kikatan* actors who can sell videos by their stage names dominates

20 % of the whole population of female actors, while 80% work as *kikaku*, a nameless female figures on screen. Those who remain *tantai* are very few and most female AV actor follows downhill of *tantai* to *kikaku* in less than a year. The chapter then exploratory introduced the story of Mizuki who is a former AV actor – appeared also in *jōsei-muke* AVs – and currently works as stripper, which captures a difficulty of career planning as AV actor.

This then led to the issues in the industry, forced labour and sloppy contracts, which has created added social stigma for the industry. The chapter looked into major criminal cases which provoked academic and civic actions protecting AV actors' human rights; *Kansai Enko* series in 2004 and *Bakky Incident* on the same year. APP was established in 1999 for academic research on violence in pornography and PAPS was in 2009 for victims' assistance. Simultaneously, the report and then the request by Human Rights Now in 2016 revealed the exploitation of AV actors, the issues around forced and non-consensual labour were raised in public attention. Upon the request by Human Right Now, AV Human Right and Ethic Organisation was thus formed in 2017 in order to play as a third party for monitoring the industry. In 2022, the new regulation law, *AV Shutsuen Higai Boushi · Kyūsai hō* (Prevention and Relief from Damage caused by AV Appearance) was implemented in order to protect workers' right in withdrawal from the participation of the industry. However, this new law is yet controversial as crapes down those who have already work in the industry and making them suffer financially. Those issues are highly problematised especially when small production companies and individuals are still engaging with such violation of human rights and illegal activities in videos sold at foreign websites.

Even before the new law, the overwhelming popularity of free online streaming sites, Porn 2.0 (Jenkins 2007) has been affecting pre-existing porn production sites. A company like SOD began to idolise its AV actors in order to create strong emotional bonds with fans. The idolisation of AV actors signifies is that fans are able to interact with idols more directly in special events such as hands shaking sessions and photo shootings, not only just viewing their contents. The key discourse is that fan invest mentally and financially to their favourite idols to support them as parent or siblings. It is paradoxical; however, the main benefits of AV production companies rely on those fan meetings, not sales' amounts of contents itself. It is important to know that *jōsei-muke* also emerged in such a desperate atmosphere.

Chapter 4 *Jōsei-muke* Adult Videos

Introduction

The previous chapter looked at the history of the AV industry and its dilemmas that has evolved around the recent technological and market transformation. SOD thus expanded its clientele to female audiences in the late 2000s, *jōsei-muke* AVs, in order to the hardship in the industry. On a basis of conversation, I have had with those who work for SOD's *jōsei-muke* lines, this chapter will therefore discuss how the genre of *jōsei-muke* AVs has emerged, what features and principles they have in stark contrast to the mainstream male desire-centred AVs, and how SOD marketise *jōsei-muke* contents and its male porn actors, *eromen* and *lovemen*.

In 2008, the first *jōsei-muke* production line SILK LABO was launched by the leadership under Eri Makino who was in her early career at SOD. "I wasn't aware or didn't stand for female sexual emancipation. Rather my motivation simply comes from the fact that women DO watch AVs. So, I wanted to make films according to their demands", according to Makino inheriting Ganari Takahashi's ethos of customer-oriented business (see Chapter 3). Following the success of SILK LABO, SOD has launched GIRL'S CH, a video streaming website of SOD's *jōsei-muke* contents which sees one million users access every month. GIRL'S CH then began its own production lines similar to SILK LABO as well as establishing a new genre of objectifying male bodies, for instance featuring "amature" boys.

The chapter then examines one of the main features of *jōsei-muke* AVs, its narrative-oriented content. In Makino's words, "SILK LABO is an explicit version of Japanese romantic drama, *getsu-ku*". *Getsu-ku*, or so-called trendy dramas is a popular genre of television drama series which often depicts complicated love relationships of youths (Iwabuchi 2004). Focusing only on romantic relationship of couples is an ethos of those dramas, which SILK LABO also inherits. Although contributing to move beyond romantic sex, GIRL'S CH also acknowledges the importance of narratives to provide situational information, allowing audience to feel empathy to protagonists. What is in common among those narratives is, that women are always centres of male attentions and (good-looking) men solve emotional or physical problems of female protagonists.

Such conventional fantasy is often discussed by several academics. Alexandra Hambleton argued that *jōsei-muke* AVs was pandering to heterosexual normative desire as female sexuality is defined by male presence (2016). Similarly, Wong and Yau's analysis of Japanese AV industry (2018) indicated the ideology that thrives around Japanese mainstream male

desire-centred AVs is “salvage ideology”; men are always saviour of female sexual desire. This “salvage ideology” can not only be seen in the mainstream AVs but also *jōsei-muke* media. Yukari Fujimoto’ analysis on *shōjo manga*, a comic genre for teenage women (2008), for instance, conceptualised that womanliness is determined by “where she belongs to”. Which echoes with Chizuko Ueno’s argument (2010) that female subjectivity is recognised by male presence.

The significant male counterparts in *jōsei-muke* AVs is its good-looking male AV actors, *eromen* and *lovemen*. The difference of them is primary that the first belongs to SILK LABO and the latter is GIRL’S CH; however, this category is fluid due to the fact that some of them perform in both and therefore *eromen* and *lovemen*. Those male actors have a specific aesthetics, similar to Japanese boys’ band, differentiating themselves from male porn actors in mainstream AVs who are overly masculine. Their job is not only to perform in *jōsei-muke* AVs but also regularly appear in several fan meetings in order to create strong emotional bonds with fans. Those events varied from group-based meetings to private “dates” during which female fans can enjoy temporary intimacy with them. The chapter will discuss how such a business model of intimacy functions, referring to Akiko Takeyama’ analysis of host clubs (2016). This section will be important to analyse fans’ activities in following chapters.

Additionally, the chapter will address the issue around the term *jōsei-muke* per se as been raised by those who engage in productions of *jōsei-muke* AVs. Ultimately, the aim of this chapter is to illustrate *jōsei-muke* AVs from a perspective of semantic analysis of the content and emotional identification that is induced not only from contents but also the presence of male porn idols in order to show the current climate in regards to *jōsei-muke* AVs.

The Beginning of *Jōsei-muke* Adult Videos

Five minutes’ walks from Shin-Nakano station, Soft on Demand (SOD), one of the monopolistic AV companies in Japan owns a huge building with seven floors. It was my first appointment with Eri Makino, an executive producer of SILK LABO, and its assistant producer Fukase. SILK LABO was SOD’s original and first production line for female users, called *jōsei-muke* (literally “for women”).

I was nervously entering the building; the corridors were full of huge posters of female porn stars alongside with the exhibitions of TENGA⁶¹ products. A couple minutes after I talked to a male receptionist about the purpose of my visit, Makino and Fukase appeared from the lift,

⁶¹ The sex toy company which was established in 2005 and well-known for its stylish design and good functions.

next to the reception desk. Both of them looked friendly with smiles on their face. We introduced each other for the first time and they took me to a meeting room which was weirdly decorated as a typical classroom in Japanese high school with a huge blackboard at the front and wooden rectangular tables and wooden chairs.

As I perhaps looked awkwardly surprised, Makino told me that the meeting room was often used for film shooting, especially for school-themed ones. That also meant, she continued, most tables and chairs had been covered by body fluids. She laughed at my awkward reaction and said, “We get used to it. Once you start not thinking about it, it’s nothing. We clean every time after shooting anyway”. Fukase went on, “But sometimes, it’s wet and smelly”, at which we laughed together. Having an expectation of this to be a formal interview, their attitude was unpredictably relaxed and welcoming.

The first theme was of course, the emergence of SILK LABO. As previously discussed, it was during a period when the whole AV industry started to decline due to the emergence of free online streaming sites (Hambleton 2016). Makino explained to me, “when I joined SOD straight after studying media production at university, I was working at advertising department for AVs. It was AVs for men, you know, needless to say. While engaging in a business collaboration project with a sex toy company, I found that there were demands for pornography that were specifically tailored for female users. Later I was tasked by the company to undertake market research and investigate what female audiences wanted to see. So, I visited sex shops and collected women’s comments on existing AVs”. According to Makino, the opinion she collected fell into two groups: one requesting more romantic/intimate narrative-based stories, the other complaining about ugly and stereotypically masculine male actors. Under Makino’s leadership, approximately ten female SOD employees gathered and then discussed what would be suitable for *jōsei-muke* AVs. In the early stage of SILK LABO, Makino and her fellow staff often received unpleasant comments from male colleagues working in other sections of SOD, who would say things like “*Omaera hentai ga atsumatteru* (In your section the perverts are gathered)” (Makino, in Iijima 2015: 46), and their brainstorm meetings therefore generally took place outside normal working hours. Hegemonic ideas stipulating that women are not supposed to talk openly about sex are still strong in Japan, even in an AV production company. During our meeting in January 2018, Makino stated that she did not question the existing gender dichotomy and was not aware of any of feminists’ critiques or challenges to the porn industry in Japan. Rather, her motivation was to encourage more enjoyable sex lives for SILK LABO users. In addition to that, Makino described SILK LABO products as targeting women who were not familiar with watching AVs. A result of this was that unlike other mainstream

pornography, SILK LABO scenes depict the “putting-on-of-condom scene” which is often described as “turn off” by male viewers. Awkward moments and long foreplay, usually missing, are featured prominently. Furthermore, SILK LABO has three categories, *Cocoon*, *Silk*, and *Undress*. *Cocoon* is softcore one for “completely beginners”, which does not show sexual intercourse with pixelated genitals. *Undress* depicts some “kinky” scenes such as group sex and role plays, while *Silk* is a genre in between of *Cocoon* and *Undress*. It should be also noted that the early SILK films such as *Body talk lesson* (2009 Tsunoda) and *Lesson, Before communications* (2010 Tsunoda) provide educational instructions for comfortable sex such as virginal exercise (*chitsu-tore*) and how to give good oral sex for your male partner. According to a survey Makino has conducted, many women in Japan experience difficulties having orgasms and feel uneasy during sex with their male partners, and the term “comfortable” should be understood in this context. Vaginal exercises known as *chitsu-tore* are featured in SILK LABO videos. They claim to promote better sexual experiences for women based on the notion that muscle strength around the vagina stimulates a G-spot orgasm⁶². Although SILK LABO is still relatively small compared to the whole Japanese AV industry, the popularity of SILK LABO is increasing; online membership has reached 70,000 in 2017 from 10,000 in 2012.

Makino and Fukase then showed me around the office building. The roof top floor was an open space with playground where they were practicing dance performance for some event during my visit. There was a young lady there, whom Fukase mentioned that she applied for SOD due to her enthusiasm for *jōsei-muke* AVs. “There are increasing numbers of women who want to work for *jōsei-muke* AVs these days, which is very encouraging for us. We never imagined that we could inspire young women like her”, said Fukase. Followingly, we took stairs to go down. The sixth floor is SILK LABO’s office. Alongside with office desks, there were plenty of clothes and props on the left side from the entrance, which looked like a bargain sale space. “I’m so sorry for this mess! It’s very embarrassing!”, said Makino as blushing and trying to clean the space. The whole floor was a section for *jōsei-muke* AVs, as Fukase explained to me. All employee there were female apart from one man. On the right side, there were four women sitting in front of computers. Fukase told me that they were working on online streaming websites, GIRL’S CH. It was already past 18 pm on Friday; however, everyone seemed working hard.

⁶² G-spot, also known as Gräfenberg Spot, is an erogenous area of vagina. If stimulated, it causes orgasm and female ejaculation. In the book “*The G Spot and Other Recent Discoveries About Human Sexuality*” (Ladas, Whipple, and Perry 1982), it is argued that G-spot is identical with prostate in male body so that men and women can equally enjoy multiple orgasms.

Another *jōsei-muke* line, GIRL'S CH was launched in 2013 and its contents were initially cuts and edits from SOD's pre-existing AVs that was considered suitable for a female audience. For instance, the current popular genres which are most often searched were "intimate sex", "women on top", "kiss", and "hard cunnilingus"⁶³. GIRLS' CH soon became successful with one million users accessing the website each month, and within the last couple of years, the producer of GIRL'S CH, Taguchi Momoko has started to produce for female consumers who sought to watch more explicit versions of SILK LABO. For instance, the new genre of "man being submissive" which depicts the objectification of young good-looking men is becoming popular among female users. In addition to that, GIRL'S CH produces titles which apply the pre-existing SOD's iconic series, *Magic Mirror Gō*, translating to female desire-centred ones. The series features a camping car with one-way mirrors and having sex in the car which is parked at different locations so that it looks like outdoor sex without actually being seen from outside. Taguchi has argued that demands from female users are bipolarized: one is narrative-oriented intimate romantic sex as SILK LABO films, while another is "hard cores" which women can use as aid for masturbation (2019). In GIRL'S CH films, Taguchi emphasises the importance of depicting both male and female bodily expressions, while most mainstream AVs focus on female bodies and blurs the male figures. Simultaneously, it is important to depict consensual sex even though it is hardcore. This is how GIRL'S CH makes a difference from the mainstream AVs. In addition to that, GIRL'S CH has collaborated other sex-related industry for women such as LOVELY POP, a sex toy shop and produced a *jōsei-muke fuzoku* shop or male escort service, namely studio CH⁶⁴. By doing so, SOD attempts to familiarise Japanese women with enjoying sex industry by applying a sex positive feminists' attitude.

Narrative Oriented *Jōsei-muke* AVs

The conversation with Makino and Fukase enlightened me that one of the biggest characteristics of *jōsei-muke* AVs is its focus on romantic narratives. The next question which came up in my mind was why women seek for narratives, what kinds of principles they hold up to when producing *jōsei-muke* AVs. Makino then explained to me "When I was younger I was obsessed with *getsu-ku*. You might not know but for instance, *Tokyo Love Story*. So definitely SILK LABO has a similar essence". *Getsu-ku* (literally means Monday 9pm) is a term to describe romantic drama series which are aired on Fuji television on Monday 9pm, or

⁶³ GIRLS' CH, available at <https://girls-ch.jp/movie/free> [Accessed 20th April 2022]

⁶⁴ studio CH was closed in 28th February 2022.

often known as *trendy dramas*. Fukase added, “SILK LABO is an explicit version of *getsu-ku*, so to say.”

Getsu-ku, or *trendy dramas* is a popular genre of television drama series especially among Japanese women from the 1990s onwards, often featuring young, single, and popular actors. One of the most iconic drama series is *Tokyo Love Story* (1991) and its last episode has achieved 32.3%; this means, one third of the whole Japanese households have watched this series. This phenomenon also achieved academic interests to undercover its sociocultural impacts not only in Japan but also abroad, which was thoughtfully represented in *Feeling Asian Modernities: Transnational Consumption of Japanese TV Dramas* (2004 edited by Kouichi Iwabuchi). According to Iwabuchi, the crucial characteristics of those TV series were that it features “youths’ love affairs, friendship, and working life in urban settings (i.e. Tokyo)” (2004:9). It also has to be emphasised that the term *trendy drama* itself exclusively signifies those which were produced from the late 1980s to the early 1990s due to the fact that its devotion “to stylishly depicting various kinds of consumerist trends in order to attract a large number of young viewers who hitherto had not watched TV dramas” (ibid). Although the term itself is commonly used for similar traits, those dramas produced after the bubble economy are categorised as *post-trendy dramas* including *Tokyo Love Story*.

Tokyo Love Story features complex relationships of four different individuals in Tokyo. The main female protagonist Rika, a returnee from abroad, works at an advertising agency and eventually falls in love with her colleague Kanji. Ehime⁶⁵-born Kanji, who is also attracted by Rika’s freewheeling personality, cannot forget his high school crush Satomi who is also working in Tokyo as a child care. Kanji’s high school friend, Kenichi who is a good-looking flirtatious man also likes Satomi. The story centers a self-determined but jealous Rika and Kanji who is not sure of his feeling between Rika and Satomi. Ito argued that the representation of Rika demonstrated “new type of contemporary woman” (2004:29) who antagonistically entails independent career-oriented mentality and traditional womanlike of waiting for Kanji’s love. The absence of detailed depiction of other relationship such as work and family facilitates viewers to focus on their story of love lives, which, I would argue, SILK LABO inherits its ethos. By her transnational audience study of trendy dramas in Hong Kong, Lisa Yuk-Ming Leung has argued those dramas serve “an emotional value for them to vent their frustration but also a reassurance that with underlying perseverance and the will to persevere, they will triumph at the end” (2004:100). In other words, the reason behind the popularity of *getsu-ku*

⁶⁵ The sothern part of Japan, which is part of Shikoku island.

underlies its ritualistic convention of emotional roller coaster, while knowing the main protagonists would never fail to achieve their success. “You know, watching romantic drama series is therapeutic or healing. Coming back home after long-hours work every day, it would be nice to watch something romantic to excite our feelings. It is a temporarily escape from stressful reality”, said Makino. The term Makino used here was *iyashi*, which signifies healing, or any objects which gives a sense of security and comfort. She emphasised therefore the importance of embracing such romantic drama aesthetics. the everlasting theme of SILK LABO is “*sunao ni narenai koibitotachi* (couples who constantly misunderstand with each other)”, said Makino.

Unlike mainstream AVs which is designed for male audience, *jōsei-muke* AVs is detail-oriented in a such a way that props on set, for example magazines and bottles of drinks, are custom made in order to keep a cinematic atmosphere, that distinguishes it from AVs for men. In general, pornography for men tend to apply pixelisation for pre-existing merchandises rather than preparing special props for the reason that men are used to watch pixelisation on AVs anyway. Makino stated, “[f]or most women, sex comes with intimate and romantic relationships. While AVs for men gets rid of all these aspects of human interactions, *jōsei-muke* AVs focuses on each step to a climax”. With the inauguration of SILK LABO in 2008, *Girl’s pleasure* was released as supplement of women’s weekly magazine *an•an* on July 29th 2009. After the success of *Girl’s pleasure*, SILK LABO released its very first title; *Body talk lesson* in 2009, which contained educational instructions for comfortable sex such as vaginal exercise and how to give good oral sex for your male partner. The second title, *Faindā no Mukou ni Kimi ga Ita* (It was You Behind the Viewfinder) directed in 2009 by Tsunoda Maiko and Miyazaki Rieko featured a woman who had never had an orgasm with her boyfriend, but then discovered sexual pleasure through an affair with a mysterious camera man. In this 120 minutes’ long film, sex scenes were designed in slow-motion in a step by step manner, allowing viewers to learn sexual techniques (Hambleton 2016). The recent SILK LABO films often start with a female protagonist who has certain problems in her life – overwork, body injury, or possibly boyfriend-related issues such as *Arinomama Dakishimete* (Embrace me as I am; 2019) and *Rihabiri no Sensei* (The Physiotherapist; 2018). The female protagonist resolves her personal problems with help from a male character. For instance, *Rihabiri no Sensei* depicts a female patient who has broken both legs in a traffic accident and her rehabilitation instructor who, coincidentally, was her high school crush. Through mental and physical support, they develop an intimate relationship and make love after her discharge. It is thus arguable that

SILK LABO focuses on the narratives behind “how-they-end-up-making-love”, while AVs for men focuses on the action of sex itself.

GIRL’S CH films, on the other hand, tend to build on narrative conventions that we do not see in conventional AVs aimed at male audience. For example, *Renai Gakuen* (Romantic School;2016) and *Parallel Kiss* (2016) depicts a single female protagonist who is approached by multiple good-looking men, not the other way around. Confused by her own popularity, the protagonist then has sex with men who represent different social types: the cute little brother/junior⁶⁶, the mature, serious older brother/boss/senior figure, the wild rebellious adventurer and the boy-next-door type who will stand by her no matter what. However, it does not necessarily have the same romantic impact as SILK LABO, since there has been increasing female voices seeking for more explicit contents. GIRL’S CH therefore produced titles which focus on traditional *kikaku* style of AVs by employing preexisting formats of *hamedori* (point of view) and *shirouto-mono* (armature) and established the new genre of “man-being-submissive”. A popular title such as *Machikado Shirouto Danshi Massage – Monzetsu Best Collection –* (Massaging Street Amateur Boys – Fainted Best Collection –;2017) employs documentary style, or so to say, gonzo of good-looking amateur men being treated an erotic massage by female character. Taguchi once explained to me that she was sometimes referring to AVs for homosexual men; however, she also emphasises the importance of showcasing “narratives” (Taguchi 2017), allowing viewers to feel empathy to protagonists. Common to SILK LABO and GIRL’S CH films, then, is that female protagonists are always the centre of male attention, both romantically and physically.

Female Fantasies of Belonging to Men

The convention of *jōsei-muke* AVs is its narrative, focusing on process which lead to sex as those who engage in *jōsei-muke* AVs at SOD believe empathy is a key factor of their principles. Naoko Mori (2010) in her study of audiences’ receptions of Ladies’ Comic, a genre of erotic manga which is targeted for women, and pointed out that Ladies’ Comic which are often based on “real” experience of the sexual encounter of readers. Female readers thus would relate to a female protagonist through emotional and bodily identification. The sense of “authenticity” plays an important role in triggering identification. In other words, stories on screen should be something “which might happen” in real life. I would say it is similar to fantasy in Natalie

⁶⁶ When siblings appear in pornographic content, it is mainly as non-blood related kin, such as step brother and sisters. While pornographic content that depicts incest does exist, it is a minor fetish.

Purcell's definition (2012) that signifies that a material phenomenon where psychological needs and social needs met. The point here is arguably the contents of *jōsei-muke* AVs corresponds with female audience's desire. And what then characterises the ideological "fantasy" which SOD provides via *jōsei-muke* AVs?

Alexandra Hambleton has analyzed SILK LABO films as a porn category aimed at women, and argued that such films ultimately end up "reinforcing ideas of normative female desires and sexual behaviour" (2016:439), because "pleasure for female viewers is defined in terms of heterosexual encounters in which the male participant leads to the action, blending the everyday and the erotic" (ibid). Although Hambleton has believed that SILK LABO films is a good attempt to control and determine female sexual desire. Parallel to Hambleton's argument, Wong and Yau (2018), who have examined the history of AV industry, argued that Japanese AVs is an embodiment of "salvage ideology": "women cannot save themselves but have to rely on men sexually. Men therefore are women's savior" (Wong and Yau 2018:5). This creates a particular cultural code: a lack of agency in women's sexual pleasure and the justification of male domination of female bodies. Although Wong and Yau exclusively discuss mainstream male desire-centered AVs, salvage ideology can also be identified in many of *jōsei-muke* AVs. As Makino once argued, "Women are always *otome*. Women wants to be treated as a little girl. And our job is to serve such fantasy". *Otome* is a term to signify maidens, or more contextually a little girl who has never been touched by men and becomes "women". The assumption that a woman's identity must be based on male attention is also a staple in Japanese pop culture, especially products designed for heterosexual women.

In her study of *shōjo manga*, a mainstream *manga* genre designed for teenage girls, Yukari Fujimoto has argued, "what most *shōjo manga* have in common is the constant self-questioning of "where/whom do I belong to?" and the desire to be accepted or embraced as she is". (2008: 143). In *shōjo manga*, the social identity of female protagonists thus depends on others (including family and friends, but mostly men); it is through recognition by others that these young females fulfil their self-esteem. The typical storylines in these media, however, suggests that the relationship between men and women is not equal, since the women generally "belong" to someone in a patriarchal manner – for examples as daughters or wives – a relationship that in effect objectifies them. I argue therefore that womanliness is defined by its male counterparts, at least in *jōsei-muke* media. Male subjectivity, on the other hand, is realised by male homosocial recognition, as feminist scholar Ueno Chizuko (2010) pointed out. Drawing on Eve Sedgwick's cultural analysis of men's same-sex bonds (1985), Ueno argued that male subjectivity depends on misogynistic discrimination and the ability to control women. The

creation of heterosexual male/female subjectivity is based on “othering its counterpart; to be female is to belong to men, and to be male is to exclude women. Recognising this gendered system of subjectivity allows us to see how female selves are created as reflections of male counterparts in a heterosexual milieu such as pornography.

Eromen and Lovemen

The “other” in the context of *jōsei-muke* AVs is the male actors, *eromen* and *lovemen*. Their role in *jōsei-muke* AVs is to embrace their female counterparts as if they were Prince Charming, so that female protagonists in the films can restore their self-confidence and realise their female subjectivity. The word *eromen* comes from a combination of erotic and men, the word *lovemen* is a love and men, which distinguishes them from male actors in mainstream pornography where they are called AV *danyū* (male porn actors); a generally hyper-masculine figure with a muscular body and large penis who can maintain an erection for a long time. The *danyū* archetype is consonant with Manabu Akagawa’s “society that problematises male impotency” (1996: 173): that is, one’s masculinity is defined by having a hard erection, and the ejaculation of dense semen. Contrary to this, *eromen* and *lovemen* are required to “maintain a non-threatening, sexually innocent image inspired by the aesthetics of Japanese pop idols’ and have an approachable ‘everyman’ aesthetic that is central to Japan’s boy-band industry” (Hambleton 2016:432). Chosen from auditioning, the requirements of *eromen* and *lovemen* are well-maintained appearance that fits to a certain beauty standard and abilities of performing in front of camera. As *jōsei-muke* AVs contain a good deal of dramatic dialogue, performing ability is particularly crucial. The distinct of *eromen* and *lovemen* depends on their attributes to production lines either SILK LABO or GIRL’S CH; however, many of them perform for both production lines and therefore *eromen* and *lovemen*.

Since 2008, SOD has actively recruited *eromen* and *lovemen*. Ittetsu Suzuki (1979–), who started his career with the inauguration of SILK LABO, has become the iconic face of *jōsei-muke* AVs and plays an important role as spokesman for sex education. Suzuki Ittetsu, Taito Tsukino (1979–) and Mūtan (1983–) were described as “the three musketeers of *eromen*” (Fuzuki 2010) due to their popularity. Ittetsu Suzuki became the first male AV actor to have an exclusive contract with a studio in 2012. This was a significant moment for the wider industry since male AV actors work as freelancers before Suzuki. It is estimated that while there are more than 10,000 active female AV actors, there are only about 70 male AV actors who work as freelancers (see *The Other Side of Sex*, a documentary film by Enoki and Takahara, 2012). Suzuki’s exclusive contract with SOD signifies that *jōsei-muke* AVs emphasise the

importance of male actors as objects of desire rather than anonymous figure that supports female figures. This is corroborated by the custom that female fans use – *kun* rather than the general honorific – *san* when speaking to and about specific men working in the industry. While the non-gender-specific – *san* suggests mutual respect between adults, – *kun* signifies a strong sense of affection and familiarity – especially that directed by adults towards male children. Whereas it shows respect to use – *san* to and about a stranger, the fact that female fans call male adults – *kun*, by contrast, indicates that they are cutifying them as small boys⁶⁷. Through language, then, female fans demasculinise *eromen* and *lovemen* while demonstrating their own power to objectify men. When the “three musketeers” completed their contracts⁶⁸ in 2017 in order to expand their career paths, they were replaced by the second generation of *eromen*: Riku Mukai, Chiaki Uehara, Sōsuke Azuma, and Daichi Oikawa. These younger *eromen*, born between 1988–1992, have contributed to attracting a wider fan base, expanding from women in their 30s and 40s to now also including women in their 20s.

The marketing system for *eromen* and *lovemen* is similar to that in other idol cultures in Japan. In the same way that idols are professionally-created popular figures (Galbraith and Karlin 2012), *eromen* and *lovemen* appear both on cross-media platforms to promote the genre of *jōsei-muke* AV and at physical fan meeting events. This carefully calculated marketing strategy is partly a reaction to the significantly increasing popularity of user-generated tube sites, so-called Porn 2.0 (Jenkins 2007), which offer non-membership streaming. In order to survive in this new environment, existing AV studio companies such as SOD decided to turn their male and female AV actors into idols, with the intention of creating stronger emotional bonds with their customers. *Eromen* and *lovemen* thus often perform at events, where fans can interact with them by shaking hands, taking photographs or hugging. SILK LABO organises, for example, bimonthly events at which four popular *eromen* perform an erotic comedy on stage, and monthly DVD signing sessions at the biggest nationwide chain of video/DVD rental shops and bookstores, TSUTAYA in Shibuya. Events are always carefully planned to maximise potential income. At signing sessions, fans receive, for instance, one ticket per DVD purchased, a marketing strategy that causes some fans to buy multiple DVDs in order to meet their favourite *eromen* as many times as possible. GIRL’S CH plans similar events, conducting monthly events with an entrance fee at the SOD office in Shin-Nakano, where they provide

⁶⁷ The honorific *kun* is often used in professional circumstances, for instance workplace and medical fields, in general from male senior to male junior. When females address male juniors using *kun*, it indicates either familiarity and affection or that the addressee occupies an inferior status.

⁶⁸ Mūtan was not in an exclusive contract with SOD.

fans with the opportunity to take instax photos with *Lovemen* for 2000 JPY⁶⁹ per shot. From my observations, it appears that most women buy more than two photos per event, suggesting that this transaction is also very worthwhile for the company. For this event *Lovemen* appear at the SOD office *shain bar* (corporate member bar), where male and female AV actors serve visitors as bartenders. A visit to the *shain bar* costs 2980 JPY⁷⁰ for 50 minutes and includes a selected DVD of the AV actors/actresses on duty as a souvenir.

In addition to these major coordinated events, individual *eromen* and *lovemen* also often have their own private fan meetings at which they provide a “boyfriend experience” (Hambleton 2016: 432). These types of events are either open to groups of fans or exclusive to one fan who has won the lottery for a “dating experience”. In this way fans of *eromen* and *lovemen* are presented with a significant amount of opportunities to engage directly with the men they desire. More mediated ways of experiencing intimacy with *eromen* and *lovemen* include, for instance, telephone dates – which cost 5000 JPY⁷¹ per 20 minutes – which give fans the opportunity to have casual conversations that may simulate a temporally-bounded pseudo-relationship. In 2018 dating experiences were developed further when GIRLS’ CH began to recruit male escorts working within the *jōsei-muke fūzoku* industry, and eventually started one, studio CH which offers women erotic massages or other sexual treatments – apart from penile-genital penetration, which it is illegal to sell. This means that female fans can now enjoy temporary intimate moments with an actor and thereby a chance to experience an embodied version of the fantasy sold in *jōsei-muke* AVs. With the price set at 25,000 JPY⁷² for 70 minutes (the minimum rate), these *jōsei-muke fūzoku* provided women with the fantasy of being princesses. Thus, audiences are able to involve themselves to different degrees: a female fan can not only watch performances on the screen, but also meet her favourite star in person and even have sex with him⁷³. There are several ways fans can become known to *eromen* and *lovemen* (depending on how much they take up what is on offer) and this is how fans develop a feeling of commitment to their own favourites, by continuing to purchase merchandise associated with them and attending events. The way in which *eromen* and *lovemen* are marketed can be understood as a form of commodification of intimacy. The business model is

⁶⁹ 12.5 GBP (1GBP=160JPY)

⁷⁰ 18.63 GBP (ibid.)

⁷¹ 31.25GBP (ibid.)

⁷² 156.25GBP (ibid.)

⁷³ Note that I am not defining “sex” as a penile-genital penetration. I here define it as an intimate communication, the forms of which vary, including touching, kissing, and stimulating genitals and other parts of body in order to induce physical and emotional pleasure.

straightforward. The popularity of *eromen* and *lovemen* depends on their performative ability to embody and convey the fantasies of the fans who repeatedly come to the events.

However, how should we understand the fantasy embodied in this transaction? In her work on the pornographic imagination, Purcell (2012) neither assumes that sexual fantasies lead to the “acting-out” of the sexual fantasy in real life, nor does she maintain that they are “just fantasies” and therefore of no consequence. Instead, she shows how fantasies are carefully imbricated in everyday life, often modulating mundane experience by adding elements of escapism and wish-fulfilment. Thus, fans come to events to temporarily become part of the fantasy and with the expectation that they will fulfil their psychological and social needs. The work of *eromen* and *lovemen* is to aid and abet this collective boyfriend fantasy. They are, in other words, performing emotional labour. *Eromen* and *lovemen* collectively present their masculinity in a way that renders it consumable by individual fans. This includes the often-stylised behaviour that is assumed to make women feel appreciated: individual attention, eye contact, paying fans compliments and so forth. This kind of emotional work shares elements with Japanese host clubs, which we can therefore refer to here as a point of comparison.

The question here will be what they actually sell. Arlie Russell Hochschild first introduced the idea of emotional labour that “requires one to induce or suppress feeling in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others” (Hochschild1983:7). In this sense, emotional labour is to be understood as a certain mindset which is consciously created for the emotional fulfilment of customers, which often could be seen several occupations in the service industry. Catherine Hakim has elaborated this emotional labour to the idea of erotic capital, which is “a combination of aesthetic, visual, physical, social, and sexual attractiveness to other members of your society, and especially to members of the opposite sex, in all social contexts” (Hakim 2011:501). Erotic capital is, according to Hakim, relying on the individual capability to perform according to hegemonic discourse of attractiveness at a certain time and space, which enacts class motilities. Although Hochschild and Hakim have admitted that any job potentially can be a platform of emotional labour or erotic capital, sex works could be understood as the extreme example. In addition to that, Hochschild and Hakim have argued that women have huge advantages due to the heteronormative gender discourse; however, this is not always the case when looking at Japanese contexts. There are some places in sex related industry where men can take advantage of their erotic capitals.

Akiko Takeyama’s ethnographic study (2010, 2016) of Japanese host clubs, a specific space in which male hosts provide intimate companionship for women, demonstrates the complexity

of gender dynamics. In this environment male hosts use their emotional labour and erotic capitals to fulfil female clients' desires in a context of hyper-neoliberal competition, in the context of which hosts depend financially on their own performances in the club. In host clubs, first-time customers meet several hosts for a reduced price (typically starting at 3000 JPY⁷⁴ per hour including all-you-can-drink). This first-time special allows female customers a chance to meet various hosts and indicate who they are interested in being hosted by at future visits, and this "in-store" relationship conditions the development of intimacy between host and client. Within the club, hosts are ordered into a hierarchical pyramid; top hosts with many clients cost the most while low level hosts cost much less (Takeyama 2010).

Certainly, hosts are more competitive compared to *eromen* and *lovemen* who have an executive contract with studios. *Eromen* and *lovemen* provide a certain set of fantasy which is mediated through SOD products, but this media-mediated fantasy intensifies in fan meeting events in similar ways to host clubs. Venues including host clubs and SOD fan events have to be a safe and acceptable sphere so that individual can be reassured of their emotional or physical safety. In this sense, SOD produces an ideological dream as a mode of production. Following chapters will shed on lights to those who self-identify as fans of *eromen* and *lovemen* in order to explore what kinds of motivations and expectations they have from the interaction with *eromen* and *lovemen*. However, before examining "female fans" of *jôsei-muke* AVs, I would like to demonstrate how producers of *jôsei-muke* AVs consider their works from a perspective of gender politics.

The Problem of the Term "*Jôsei-muke*"

This chapter has discussed *jôsei-muke* AVs as is in a stark contrast to the yet dominant male-desire centre oriented AVs. It is however important to note that, although this dichotomy of mainstream and alternative might seem gendered due to its origin as a reaction opposed to male desire-centred pornography, it does not and should not mean that alternative pornographies are exclusive to cisgender heterosexual male audiences.

After discussed overall of *jôsei-muke* AVs, the conversation with Makino and Fukase went lowkey, telling about how two actually felt about the way *jôsei-muke* AVs was framed in mass media. Fukase told me, "*Jôsei-muke*, is just a label for us. We don't have any political or social ambition to change Japanese society. It is purely a business for us, as we are employees of SOD. The term *jôsei-muke* is also useful for men, so that they don't have to see men's reaction

⁷⁴ 18.75 GBP (1GBP=160JPY).

of orgasm. For instance, it is the same with labels on drinks. You need labels to describe what you sell otherwise customer would not purchase”. Makino continued “Surely the term *jōsei-muke* is misleading. But we have all been working here at SOD even before SILK LABO. Women do watch AVs and there are lots of female employees at SOD. I don’t even know if the term *jōsei-muke* is appropriate. I would be happy to use a better term if it exists...”. Fukase then added, “If we say *jōsei-muke*, it would give a misimpression that women do not watch AVs in general. So, yeah, I would not deny that the term itself might be problematic. When we were asked the definition of *jōsei-muke* by several mass media, we often said that ‘adult video for women, by women’. But really, it is not what we aim for”. The point raised by Makino and Fukase here is that, there have been women had been engaging with the consumption of AVs as well as production and distribution before *jōsei-muke* AVs emerged. Acknowledging the fact that women DO watch AVs as well as have sexual desire in the same way with men is crucial in regards to the politics of gender dichotomy in and outside of the industry.

The current dichotomy of “mainstream” and “*jōsei-muke*” thus is just about labelling, which makes it convenient for users to search for their needs. Or harshly, the term itself might be considered as token and producing heteronormative stereotypes of female sexual desire. As Makino stated “We receive a lot of criticisms from feminists, for instance, ‘why is woman not the top!’. But that’s not what female audience demand”. I would argue, however, the importance of this inclusivity and visibility of female voices in the industry, the significance of *jōsei-muke* is that the term itself shows female voices in the industry despite of the ambivalence of the term. From a perspective of representation, gender and queer studies scholar Akiko Shimizu (2016) has claimed that:

“With regard to the cultural and social context of a particular expression of sex in a preexisting hegemonic system of 'showing'/being seen', how can we demonstrate a different system of 'seeing'/'showing' and what would its relationship be to the existing politics of the gaze and of sex? The relationship of those two systems is crucial for understanding pornographic expressions and the politics of sex from a feminist or queer perspective” (2016: 158).

The presence of female pornographers in the industry is already challenging as such, but the representational changes they have brought in are also crucial to understand “seeing/showing” relationships that are different from mainstream AVs. It is also important to note that, although this dichotomy of mainstream and *jōsei-muke* might seem gendered due to its origin as a critical

reaction to male desire-centred ones, it does not and should not mean that *jōsei-muke* AVs is exclusive to heterosexual women. The significance of *jōsei-muke* AVs is that people, especially women, have options to choose different kinds of AVs alongside with the mainstream male desire-oriented ones. Such new inclusivity in the industry, I would argue, demonstrates that all pleasure matters and should be represented on screen regardless of gender and sexuality.

Conclusion

The chapter has discussed *jōsei-muke* AVs in regards to its development, different aesthetics from the mainstream male desire-centred AVs, and how it marketises their male porn actors, *eromen* and *lovemen*. SOD launched *jōsei-muke* production lines in order to expand and cultivate female consumers, SILK LABO in 2008 and GIRL'S CH in 2013. Interviews with Makino and Fukase demonstrated that the initial idea of *jōsei-muke* AVs was to provide educational instruction for women who presumably were not familiar with watching AVs. Simultaneously, as it was demanded by female potential audience, SILK LABO features romantic narrative-based AVs, focusing how protagonists end up making love. Later GIRLS'CH led by Taguchi, joined the troop of *jōsei-muke* AV production lines of SOD. Although its differentiation from SILK LABO in the way that shows a new genre of "man being submissive", Taguchi acknowledge the bipolarised demands from female audience and the majority is yet seeking for "romantic narratives".

The chapter therefore examined what kinds of narratives *jōsei-muke* AVs have as its convention. From Makino's comment on *getsu-ku* or trendy dramas, it has become apparent that SILK LABO films inherit the convention of those romantic dramas that depict complicated romantic love relationship of youth as discussed in Iwabuchi (2004). The main feature of SILK LABO films is that a female protagonist overcome emotional or/and physical problems by an assist of good-looking man. The popular titles of GIRL'S CH, on the other hand, depict a female protagonist who is confused by romantic and sexual approaches from multiple good-looking men. The main theme in *jōsei-muke* AVs therefore is arguably that female subjectivity is always centering on male attentions. While such conventions in *jōsei-muke* AVs are argued as pandering heterosexual normative female desire (Hambleton 2016) and echo with "salvage ideology" in the mainstream AVs (Wong and Yau 2018) the representation of female subjectivity based on male presence can be seen other mass media for women. The chapter thus explored Fujimoto's analysis (2004) on *Shōjo manga* which indicates that womanhood is

defined by heterosexual matrix. Such “othering” in heterosexual matrix is, I argue, the main theme of the fantasy that is produced by SOD via *jōsei-muke* contents.

The agency of such fantasy in *jōsei-muke* AVs is its male AV actors, *eromen* and *lovemen*. Embracing approachable “everyman” aesthetics that is central to Japanese boys’ band aesthetics, *eromen* and *lovemen* distinguish themselves from typical AV *danyū*, overly masculine figures. Not only perform in *jōsei-muke* AVs, their job is also to regularly appear in several fan meeting settings from group meeting to private ones which could potentially be highly intimate. *Eromen* and *lovemen* provide a certain set of fantasy which is mediated through SOD products, but this media-mediated fantasy intensifies in fan meeting events in similar ways to host clubs. This point will be elaborated in the following chapters.

The chapter then finalised with problematising the term of *jōsei-muke* AVs, as it was raised by those who engage with it. The term *jōsei-muke*, although it sounds highly gendered, is to be understood as just a label according to Makino and Fukase. More importantly, it has to be emphasised that women have been watching AVs even before the emergence of *jōsei-muke* AVs. By employing Akiko Shimizu’s argument (2016), I argue that the relationship of “seeing/showing” in *jōsei-muke* AVs has brought new alternatives to the AV industry, regardless of gender of audiences.

The following chapters will look deeply into the fandom of *eromen* and *lovemen* on a basis of series of interviews with female fans and participant observations at several fan events in order to understand what those female fans actually DO to connect with one another and to invest emotional intimacy with *eromen* and *lovemen*.

Chapter 5 The Fandom and Female Fans of *Jôsei-muke* AVs

Introduction

“Our clientele... I do not why but most female fans of *eromen* and *lovemen* are financially affluent women have no special hobbies apart from ‘chasing’ *eromen* and *lovemen*. And they like *Johnny’s* idols⁷⁵ and *Yuzu*⁷⁶. I am into Korean idols, but for *eromen* and *lovemen* fans it is *Johnny’s* idols and *Yuzu*”, said Fukase, an assistant producer of SILK LABO while having tea at “school” in the SOD office building. “*Yuzu* and *Johnny’s*? what does it mean?”, I asked to Fukase. Fukase then continued, “Come on, they are popular and everybody likes them. It means female fans of *eromen* and *lovemen* are typical Japanese women”. Makino then added, “When we started, our main clients are housewives in 30s and 40s. I have seen those in 60s though. For them, watching AVs was never a thing before *jôsei-muke* AVs. But these days, there are increasing clients in 20s. I believe those younger ones have different attitudes towards sex because of online information regarding AVs. Casual sex and online dating apps are not a taboo for younger generation. For us, online dating apps seem very dodgy as in the film *Akunin*⁷⁷!”, while she was laughing.

The conversation above occurred when I visited SOD office for the second time. The way Fukase and Makino have described female clientele of *jôsei-muke* AVs gives an impression that female fan’s understanding of sex has been evolving over generations. At the same time, the emphasis on “typical” Japanese women “chasing” *eromen* and *lovemen* implies the enthusiasm of female fans. Fukase then invited me to several upcoming events of *eromen* and *lovemen*, she said: “You should see how female fans are dressed up for *eromen*. They put on their best clothes and sometimes show their half of breasts to boost their femininity. I think, in the end, they want to be seen sexually by men”. Makino who sat down next to Fukase, added: “It’s probably Japanese *Yobai*⁷⁸ culture. Women waiting for men to come for sex”.

The way in which female fans present themselves in the fan community of *jôsei-muke* AVs is a subject of this chapter. Based on ethnographic description of the event, SILK Festival Autumn 2018, which is the first *eromen* event I have attended, I will examine the characteristics

⁷⁵ *Johnny’s* is a talent agency specialising in male entertainers.

⁷⁶ Japanese pop rock duo.

⁷⁷ *Akunin (Villain)* directed by Lee Sang-il in 2010 is a film depicting a serial killer who use dating app for hunting his targets.

⁷⁸ Ancient Japanese culture practiced by unmarried men and women. At night man would silently visit a woman's house to sleep together.

of the fan community and female fans's expectations for the interaction through *eromen* and *lovemen*, accompanying interviews with them. While the fan community of *eromen* and *lovemen* presents itself as a one of *sabukaru* realm which fundamentally is a group of people with the same interests. And the primary aim of *sabukaru* group is a tool of communication to share the same imaginary bounds with other members of the group (Miyadai 2007). The use of Twitter in the fan community plays an important role in day-to-day communication and also create each fan's identity by stating or retweeting one's favorite (*oshi*) *eromen* and *lovemen*'s tweets, which I argue is the main characteristic of *oshi-katsu*, or supporting activity. Due to the nature of an erotic or sex-related subject of *jōsei-muke* AVs, many female fans use their Twitter names to separate their other social lives from the fan community. In a sense, they have a particular "face" in the fan community. I use a Japanese philosopher Kiyokazu Washida's definition (1998) of "face" in which one's social identity is not fixed but constituted exchange according to different social settings. This pseudonymous social setting functions as a sanctuary for those female fans to speak about their sexual desire and pleasure.

The chapter then will look at the expectation which female fans have for attending those events. As Fukase's comments above, female fans "boost" their femininity when visiting events. The interlocutors which I encountered at the event also informed me that their main motivation was to forget about their everydayness as "*obasan*" (connately sexually unattractive middle-aged women) and gain a sense of femininity from interaction with *eromen* and *lovemen*. To understand fans' desire to gain a sense of femininity, I employ Axel Honneth's definition of "recognition" (1995). Recognition in this context means the reciprocal affirmation of self that is crucial to achieve self-realisation in an intersubjective society. As Honneth argues, recognition is fundamentally mutual and "occurs via emotional bonds, the granting of rights, or a shared orientation to values" (1995:94). However, in this particular heterosexual milieu – the fan community of *eromen* and *lovemen* – recognition, becomes a way for female fans to purchase self-realisation and a sense of femininity, whilst *eromen* and *lovemen* attain fame and money through the same process. I will thus define this as commodified recognition.

This sense of recognition, inevitably functions a source for competitions among fans, although the fan community itself provides a sense of belongingness – a particular social identity – with fans. Drawing from Tinaliga's (2018) "competitive performativity" in the context of K-pop idols, female fans of *eromen* and *lovemen* compete with each other for years of supporting and contributions; that is, attending as many events as possible, purchasing merchandise, and being remembered by each *eromen* and *lovemen*. Simultaneously, bullying resulting from jealousy between fans, as I will show, is present in the fandom. This is because

for the majority of fans, I engaged with, the recognition that they felt in the liminal spaces of such fan events was “real”. Employing the term “bounded authenticity” in Elizabeth Bernstein’s (2007), fans’ interactions with *eromen* and *lovemen* are paradoxically both authentic and commodified; mediated by a certain set of fantasies which the production companies provide.

I will consider that this unique social setting of the fan community is a liminal space. However, it is important to emphasise that unlike the original of Victor Turner’s theory on ritual (1969), the idea of liminality here is based on *virtuality* of Bruce Kapferer: “the virtual of ritual is a thoroughgoing reality on its own, neither a simulacrum of realities external to ritual nor alternative reality. It bears a connection to ordinary, lived realities as depth to the surface” (2004: 37). I therefore conceptualise the physical and emotional space of the fan community as ritual space due to its unique setting and liminality from the “real” social realm. This specific fan community functions as a liminal space where fans experience the “bounded authenticity” – “the sale and purchase of authentic emotional and physical connection” (Berstein 2007:103) – and compete for the *eromen* and *lovemen*’s attention. The competition between fans can sometimes be hostile as they feel praised or threatened their femininity. In that sense, they become objects of desire, albeit elusive ones. Fans spend considerable resources pursuing them and helping them build their careers, often to their financial detriment.

Entering the Transformative *Sabukaru* Space

It was in the early autumn afternoon of mid-September, remains hot and humid weather of typical summer in Tokyo. Walking through Kabuki-chō in Shinjuku always seems intense, because it is a town of thirst for alcohol, money, drugs, and sex. Thousands of host/hostess clubs, incredibly cheap bars which are presumably associated with yakuza behind, skyscraper lookalike love hotels, and small information centers of brothels. Kabuki-chō is vivid with neon lights during the night. It is often said that it would be no safety for a single young woman to walk around Kabuki-chō alone at night, although it is safer during the daytime as the town still sleeps and is full of young people heading to the cinema or amusement arcade as I used to during my teenage. Avoiding scout men in black suits on the street looking for potential female employees at brothels or hostess clubs, I rushed to Shinjuku Naked Loft which is on Shoku-an street, in between Kabuki-chō and Shin-ōkubo, the biggest Korean town in Tokyo Metropolitan. As arriving Shinjuku Naked LOFT, it was a small café with a wooden door. The semi outside terrace space was covered with a black curtain so that it was impossible to see inside from outside.

Shinjuku Naked Loft is one of talk event space chains LOFT, which often features *sabukaru* related events. *Sabukaru* is a Japanese term for subculture; however, the connotation of *sabukaru* is different from the original meaning in the tradition of cultural studies which signifies subculture as an opposition, challenge, or a form of resistance to the dominant ideology, hegemony, and social norms (Hebdige 1979). Rather, *sabukaru* should be understood as inclusive whole ways of individual expressions of fragmented interests such as anime, manga, music, fashion, video games, film, erotic contents, LGBTQ, urban myths, occults, and religions. LOFT group is commonly known as “a pantheon of *sabukaru*” for its nature as a talk event space. The founder and owner of LOFT group, Yū Hirano (2017) has stated that anyone can do anything at LOFT unless it is a crime under the name of freedom of expression. Since its opening in 1995, LOFT has hosted any kinds of *sabukaru* events, music, film, literature, manga, anime, comedy, idols, erotic contents, politics, economy, and social activism.

Shinji Miyadai (2007) analysed the history of *sabukaru* since the end of WWII and the emergence of youth culture and argued that communication was the common theme in any form of *sabukaru*. A particular media provides a certain interpretation of society. Those who “imagine” to share this interpretation assemble and form a group of the same interests, often described as *sākuru* (circle), *bu* (sect), and *aikoukai/doukoukai* (club) regardless social class and gender although there is a marked tendency for people of a similar background to share similar *sabukaru* interests. Considering that biannual visitors at Comic Market, the biggest fan convention in the world, reaches over half a million, the *sabukaru* realm is a huge part of the Japanese economy, culture, and society⁷⁹. The social system of *sabukaru* in Miyadai’s definition is not based on cognitive factual information shared by people; rather it consists of imaginary bounds of sharing the same fantasy. Despite the level of participation in a specific community, it is premised that participants share the same motivation and expectation for entering the community per se. In this sense, whilst *sabukaru* provides a certain bonded identity as in a sense of belonging, it eliminates the unique individuality of each member of groups at the same time. Therefore, each *sabukaru* group is fluid and constantly changes members of groups. Miyadai has pointed out that this fluidity resulted from the high degree of freedom of choice of individuals in modern Japan; however, there arguably are common implications to enter a specific group of *sabukaru* realm.

⁷⁹ 73 0, 000 visitors in August 2019. (Association for preparation of Comic Market, Twitter, 12th August 2019)

This was my first time to attend SOD's *eromen* event. In a huge space of 72.6 m², there was a small stage with a screen behind in the front and a bar counter on the right side. As it was a café/event space, they also served food and drinks during events. Entering the venue, I told the reception staff that I was invited as a researcher. The receptionist checked my name and let me in. The venue was overcrowded. Six or seven people were sitting around each small round-shaped table and some of them were standing backside of the venue. There was no single man apart from the staff at the bar counter. At the stage, Fukase was selling merchandise of *eromen* such as pictures and DVDs. As I was standing clueless, a male staff of Shinjuku Naked Loft politely came up to me and said, "you need to sit somewhere" and led me to a small table on the right corner, which was presumably outside deck covered by a black curtain. It was already noon, just 30 minutes before the event started.

On entering Shinjuku Naked Loft, I see a huge crowd of women, roughly 40 to 50 people. Having entertained an image of *sabukaru* LOFT as a place of political debate, it is somehow surreal to see that many women as I have a biased image of Shinjuku Naked Loft is often full of men with speculative attitudes⁸⁰. In line with Henri Lefebvre's definition of third place (1974), the spatial moment of the *eromen* event is remote from any social practice of everydayness and authoritarian ideology. Lefebvre pointed out that the third space was a classical theatrical space which was a conjuncture of experienced and perceived space. According to Lefebvre, the first place is where everydayness is practiced with the sense of "grassroots" experience of people there, while the second space is associated with a regime of professionals for instance urban planners. As a Marxist, Lefebvre considered space three-tier dialectics and the third, a hybrid space is where the moment of presence is emphasised away from any other social practice. Here, there was only one intention among the audience, which was having a shared fantasy experience, both virtual and real at the same time, of *eromen* and *lovemen*.

Twitter and Social Persona (*Kao*) for *Oshi-katsu*

Awkwardly grouped, I sat down with four others at the same table. A middle-aged woman kindly spoke to me and asked, "Is it your first time? Who is your *oshi* (a favorite)?" I told her that I was a fan of Sousuke Azuma, who was one of *eromen* on stage today since I knew him for his constantly appearance on web TV as an iconic figure of "*saitai otoko*" (the worst man) for his open attitude of speaking about sexual experiences.

⁸⁰ I have to claim that my previous experiences of Shinjuku Naked Loft were associated with events of urban myths, occults, and political arguments.

The term *oshi* connately means one's favorite here, which is often coined with *-katsu* (activity) to represent the act of support or to cherish on someone or something that one really likes. *Oshi-katsu*, or supporting activity is a popular Japanese term and is often viewed positively because it provides mental welfare for those who engage. The object of support, or *oshi* could be anything, from pop idols as exemplified here by *eromen* and *lovelomen* to anime characters for instance, Hello Kitty. *Oshi-katsu* was originally emerged in relation to AKB 48 idol business (Galbraith and Karlin 2012) which fans support a specific one among AKB 48 and mobilise together in order to vote her (a verb *osu*, to recommend) at the event of the general election which determines the main singer for an upcoming single. Those fans have been also known as *otaku*: "individuals obsessed with computers or particular aspects of popular culture, often possessing limited social skills" (Stalker 2018: 395). Despite of such a negative reputation, the term *otaku* has become popular among youths for instance, *Johnny's otaku* and *oshi-katsu* signifies their fan activities. According to Haruka Tsutsui (2019), *oshi-katsu* is a form of loving because those who engage in *oshi-katsu* choose one favorite among other as irreplaceable object. I would add that it is a form of identity formation as *oshi-katsu* creates social bounds with *oshi* and other fans and it may therefore the question above was instantly thrown to me as a social greeting.

The woman, whose name was Eriko accompanied with her friend, told me that her *oshi* was Sho Kitano, one of the most popular *eromen* at that time for his cute puppy lookalike appearance. Eriko told me, "I actually never met a fan of Azuma-kun. Normally, women here like either Kitano-kun or Natsume-Kun⁸¹". I asked why these two are popular, while introducing myself as a researcher and not knowing much of the nature of the event. Eriko then explained, "Maybe it's because they look representing cute younger boys. For someone like me, a middle-aged woman, I just cannot help supporting them. By the way, do you have a Twitter account?". We exchanged our Twitter accounts as Eriko genuinely seemed interested in my research journey.

Through the conversation I had with Eriko, it has become apparent that fans exchange their Twitter accounts in order to share information with each other, as well as to interact with *eromen* and *lovelomen*. Twitter seems a crucial tool for fans so that they can connect with each other both online and offline. Twitter is a social media of microblog and often used for business planforms for promotional purpose, as *eromen* and *lovelomen* do. Simultaneously, for individuals

⁸¹ Kanata Natsume has changed his name since 2019 and currently is known as Riku Mukai.

such as female fans here, Twitter is mainly a means for communication (Kitamura et al 2016). While the amount of words is limited to only 140 words, Twitter is a platform to express one's opinions, thoughts, and daily lives which are shared by potentially multiple people. The significance of Twitter is also one can directly interact with celebrities and big names with an at sign (@), which tweets appear on their timelines. With a hashtag (#), one can search for those who share the same interests. Those styles of communication are resulting from the traffic of "accidental interests" (Sasaki 2016:141), allowing relationship without a string of offline interaction. The population of Twitter users in Japan marks 58.95 million, ranking the second in worldwide. For both business and friendly communications, Twitter is arguably a significant communication tool in Japan.

Twitter functions in the fan community of *jōsei-muke* AVs functions in two dimensions: the one is to follow a favorite, *oshi eromen* and *lovemen* and official accounts of SILK LABO and GIRL'S CH to receive information of new contents and upcoming events. Due to the nature of Twitter, fans can send "reply" to these accounts to express their comments. In addition to that, some of *eromen* and *lovemen* spontaneously use TwitCasting to interact with fans. TwitCasting is a live streaming service on Twitter. While one live streaming on TwitCasting, audiences can make comments and questions, or furthermore they can give gifts (*sashiire*)⁸² to help a live streamer to make profits. It is thus an online form of a fan event. Some *eromen* and *lovemen* spontaneously but frequently use TwitCasting to interact with fans due to its nature of casualty. The advertisements of TwitCasting would be informed on Twitter before a couple of hours before. Twitter is therefore important tool for fans to simultaneously "follow" *eromen* and *lovemen*.

Another function of Twitter is for fans to interact with each other, as I exchange our Twitter accounts with Eriko. As well as sharing *jōsei-muke* AVs related tweets to inform each other, fans can get to know each other's personalities by tweeting their daily lives and commenting on them. For instance, Eriko's tweets are mainly about cosmetic products, home-made foods, and *lovemen*'s theatre performances which she has been to. These tweets give an impression of Eriko's specific personality as someone who likes taking care of herself and going to theatre performances. Twitter also has a direct mailing (DM) service which one can text to a certain person privately. It is therefore possible for fans to keep in touch with each other without

⁸² Gifts or *sashiire* is to be purchased with points on TwitCasting. Users will receive free points based on the frequency they log in to TwitCasting or they can buy points with online payments services such as PayPal and Amazon Pay.

exchanging phone numbers, email addresses, or LINE ID⁸³. In a way that one does not have to provide real names or other personal information. It is not usual to have a Twitter account with one's real name in the same way as Facebook and LinkedIn; however, one can also have multiple accounts on Twitter according to different social settings. Especially in this unique setting of the fan community, it is common to call each other by their Twitter account names which are presumably nicknames or something completely different from their original birth names. Most fans including Eriko whom I have encountered during my research have presented themselves with their nicknames or non-birth names. Moreover, I have found that some of them interestingly seemed very uncomfortable disclosing their real names. Albeit fans know and get along with each other well, it is difficult to reach their most important personal information; real names. In other words, I argue that fans present a certain version of themselves in the fan community.

The philosopher Kiyokazu Washida has used the word *kao* (face) to conceptualise the idea of multi-personas for different social settings.

“‘Face’ is constituted exchange. It does not belong exclusively to anyone in a way that can signify a specific persona. ‘Face’ is not beyond reciprocity, rather it appears and vanishes, is attained, and stolen in reciprocity. It is therefore accurate to say ‘self’ comes into ‘face’ or ‘face’ appears in one’s face” (1998:196).

This means, one's identity is not a fixed or static one but only appears in a dialogue with others. One's identity is verified only when it is seen or recognised by others. Referring to Gilles Deleuze and Pierre-Félix Guattari's *visagéification*; the idea that face is a social construction that eliminates other ecology into background scenes, Washida has asserted that face does not belong to one as it is often imagined. Rather, the idea of “having a face” coupled with the pleasure of interacting with the other and at the same time the struggle of not being able to escape from the other. In other words, we are all constantly to be someone's “other” to have a face.

One's “face” or social identity varies according to different social settings. The creation of social identity is not purely in one's control, but is shaped by situations and particular surroundings. This is very obvious in the way in which fans use Twitter names in the fan

⁸³ LINE is a popular freeware app for instant communication in Japan which is similar to WhatsApp.

community. When entering the fan community, most fans create a Twitter account only for the engagement in the fan community, which is known as *sabu-aka* (subsidiary account) or *shumi-aka* (hobby account), and *ura-aka* (“behind” account). The terms used to refer to these accounts suggests that there is a “main account” (*hon-aka*) in contrast to the subsidiary accounts. Especially the term *ura* in Japanese signifies backside that connotation is directly opposed to the notion of *omote* (the frontside) or *hon* (the main). The notion of *ura* is associated with the sense of illicit, taboo, and immoral. Simultaneously, there are Japanese terms of *omote no kao* (front face) and *ura no kao* (back face). The first represents superficial or social face while the latter is one’s true intentions. The idea of *kao* (face) has already exist in Japanese terms. It should be therefore noted here that these terms are not exclusive to the fan community of *jōsei-muke* AVs and it is not unusual to have multiple accounts according to different social settings, especially in *sabukaru* milieu. In a sense, people tailor each profile of Twitter accounts and follow those who are associated with their interests. For instance, if one were a specific *eromen* fan, she would appear as “XXX’s fan” in her profile and her following would be SOD’s promotional accounts and other *eromen* fans.

Fans of *jōsei-muke* AVs are more than cautious. This is because women speaking openly about sex is still widely considered taboo in Japan. Eriko’s accompanied friend, Chihiro who had been watching my conversation with Eriko jumped into the conversation: “I heard that you are researching about *eromen* and *lovemen*, but I don’t want anyone in my workplace to know I’m here”. As I made sure her that every information would be pseudonymised and no information would be included without approval, Chihiro disclosed about her experience on Twitter. “You know, I do retweet about *eromen* and *lovemen* events in order to remind myself and my *oshi-katsu* friends on Twitter. But there are several times when some random disgusting men who sent me nasty messages on DM, asking me if I want to hook up. That’s disgusting”, said Chihiro. It is not pleasant for most women to be misunderstood as sexually “available” ones. This is also partly the reason that most female fans are uncomfortable with disclosing their full public profiles, such as full names, birthdays, and jobs, even between female fans. Simultaneously, this pseudonymous social setting functions as a sanctuary for those female fans to speak about their sexual desire. As Chihiro’s comment, such topics could easily give misunderstandings when it is discussed in the heteronormative public sphere. By dismissing public personas, each female fan actively engages in the creation of this sanctuary of the fan community. By applying the idea of Washida’s face, it is arguable that female fans’ personalities are carefully calculated in the fan community. Despite of the range of age groups, there is a certain homogeneity among fans which is the condition that most of them have the

same purpose or motivation; to enjoy the interaction with *eromen* and *lovemen* and chatting with each other while ignoring other issues in their own lives. Again, the premise here is to enjoy fantasy in which social and psychological needs are met (Purcell 2012).

This pseudonymous-oriented and fantasy-driven fan community underlie in the *virtuality* of Bruce Kapferer (2004): that is an ongoing lived reality that exists parallel to the other realities. Not to be confused with cyberspace, it is an artificial, yet autonomous communal space that is designed for specific social and psychological needs. Following Washida's idea of the face again, it is not about the question of authenticity or dualism. Rather the premise here I am taking is that we all live in an assemblage of different societies which themselves have fluidity, exchangeability, and multiple functionalities (Deleuze and Guattari 1988), integrating offline and online interactions. This means the use of Twitter in the fan community plays also an important role for fans to engage with the community. It is not secondary or unauthentic, rather it has a different role for connecting with *eromen* and *lovemen* and other fans.

To sum up, the fan community is constantly shaped by female fans with a certain "face" which premises motivations and purposes to express their sexuality while dismissing other faces that are considered to be public or authentic. In other words, it is the community of similar "faces". Simultaneously, the presence or creation of "face" is not limited to physical space but also online space such as Twitter is also crucial. By considering all, it is arguable that this fan community which is set by SOD but constantly shaped by female fans is a mode of production of the fantasy of ideological dream with the guarantee of fans' emotional or physical safety.

Feeling "Fresh" Women: Restoring Femininity

The event itself was a talk show-style performance, and where the audience could purchase drinks and food from their table while four *eromen* were present on stage, acting out an erotic comedy. As waiting for the event to start, I asked Eriko and Chihiro how often and why they came to *eromen* and *lovemen* events. Eriko explained to me that she had constantly come to events for a year since having an instant crush with Sho Kitano who was featured in *an•an* (see Chapter 4). Chihiro, on the other side, knew about *jōsei-muke* AVs through Ittetsu Suzuki who appeared on TV and thus started to discover about it herself.

Eriko said, "I wish I could come to these events more. But I can only make it on Saturday as I have a husband and two kids to take care of. Also, if you want to go to every event which SOD offers, it would be more than 80,000 JPY a month! Buying several DVDs, going to every theater performance, and attending every event...it's a lot". As my face probably looked very shocked, Eriko and Chihiro laughed. I asked them what attracts them the most here. Chihiro

explained: “You know, we are *obasan* (a Japanese term for a middle-aged woman) who have already done with romantic relationship life. Coming *eromen* events and chatting with them makes me feel fresh, like a young girl. For me it is a nice short escape from my everyday routine”, while smiling to Eriko.

The majority of female fans that I could grasp at the time were assumingly in their early 30s or above. The event was on Saturday afternoon, so that assumingly someone like Eriko and Chihiro, housewives, were the main population there. It is not difficult to imagine that *eromen* and *lovemen* events function as a little treat for them in a way so that they can enjoy their “hobbies”, no more different from watching films, playing tennis, and learning foreign languages, for instance. However, the words *obasan* that is self-described by Chihiro discloses the nature of fantasy which *eromen* and *lovemen* events generate.

The word *obasan* is a term to describe a middle-aged woman, with connotations of “mature” and “married” or “sexually unattractive”. An economist Takanobu Nakajima (2007) has defined that Japanese women become *obasan* when they discard sexual attractiveness to seduce men due to their marriage or simply age. According to an online survey by Mynavi News in 2015⁸⁴, more than half among 300 people (single, both men and women) have defined that women became *obasan* from the age of 30s or 40s, often accompanying with certain symbolic features such as physical aging, self-carelessness, and sometimes emotional strength which is considered intimidating to men and younger people. Nakajima, however, has argued that women become *obasan* by their own will and *obasan* is considered positively from an economic perspective since “maintaining femininity” cost a lot as women got older. Albeit this argument sounds highly problematic, Nakajima’s point was made from the economic statistical data of how women in the 30s to 50s (respectively) engage with the consumption in Japanese society.

From an economic perspective, Nakajima has pointed out that *obasan* often engages with the consumption of male idols such as Korean actors, male entertainers in *Johnny’s* agency, and young baseball players, which *eromen* and *lovemen* are also on the list. Despite those “fans’ consumptions/participations” are not particularly unique to *obasan*, Nakajima has claimed that there is a psychological need of *obasan* to restore femininity which they might have (or been socially forced to) forgotten throughout their career as maternal ones. Akiko Takeyama (2016) also has pointed out, in her anthropological study of host club (see Chapter 4), that female

⁸⁴ Josei ha Nasai kara Obasan desuka? (From when women become obasan?), 2015 June 30th. *Mynavi News*. Available at: <https://news.mynavi.jp/article/20150630-a304/> [Accessed 19 April 2022]

clients in host clubs are looking for restoring femininity through interactions with male hosts who treat them as girlfriends. To be a center of male attention, even if it were temporarily, functions restoring femininity. Takeyama has stated;

“If *obasan* is a culturally constructed object that pressures women to fight aging or avoid it, there is no escape from *onna no shōmikigen* (expiration date of womanliness) –a metaphorical reminder that their biological clock is ticking. *Shōmikigen* (food expiration date) is taken very seriously in the Japanese marketplace, where freshness is everything. The idea of “best by” is applied to womanliness in everyday conversation as if women themselves were consumable objects and *obasan* were fated to be dumped like garbage” (2016:13).

Womenliness in this context is thus strictly tied up with desirability from men, echoing with ideological discourse in *jōsei-muke* media (see Chapter 4). Following the comments of Eriko and Chihiro above, they come to those *eromen* and *lovemen* events in order to restore their femininity that would attract heterosexual counterparts and not to be ignored or dumped as *obasan*, despite of the financial commitment.

During a 30-minutes break before the second part of the event, Chihiro suggested me to purchase instax photo sessions with *eromen* which cost 2000 JPY⁸⁵ per shot. “You should take some private photos with them as well! Mukai-kun is very famous for his photo shooting style during which he would hold you like his girlfriend!”. As I was looking around where to buy a ticket for instax photo, Eriko told me “No, not today. But you can try on new title release events that happen every month. I like him for his flirtatious style which makes me feel like a woman. I am married but it’s not cheating because I just support him as a fan. But sometimes you need to feel flattered by good looking men, right?”.

The *eromen* and *lovemen* business model is premised on the idea that female fans can enjoy the fantasy of being desired in a safe milieu. I would here like to return to the question of subjectivity and to consider why the presence of “others”, in this context of males, is important. “Theory of recognition” by Axel Honneth and Charles Taylor, is relevant to capture the idea of centring one’s subjectivity on others. Both Honneth and Taylor put an emphasis on recognition as a condition for self-realisation, because social life is intersubjective. Taylor

⁸⁵ 14 GBP (1GBP=160JPY).

defined that recognition “is a vital human need” (1994: 26) and that misrecognition “can inflict a grievous wound, saddling its victims with a crippling self-hatred” (ibid). Honneth argued, in a similar vein, that social struggle is experienced through “disrespect”; that is, being denied conditions of self-formation. As crucial components of recognition, in order to attain self-realisation, Honneth (1995) enumerated love, rights and solidarity in intersubjective relations. Of those three components, love is the most fundamental, and is required to develop self-respect and self-confidence. Lack of love, on the other hand, leads to a pathological mentality. While the concept of love per se is difficult to define, it is possible to argue that the power of language functions as an index for social recognition. Taylor pointed out “the genesis of human mind is [...] not monological, not something each person accomplishes on his or her own, but dialogical” (1994:32). In other words, everyday dialogue with “the significant others”, according to Taylor, functions to shape self-realisation. Recalling Washida’s discussion of “face”, one’s everyday identity is constituted in sometimes precarious dialogue with others. One’s identity is acknowledged only when it is seen or recognised by others. Washida therefore speaks of this idea of “face” as an interface of mutual recognition between the self and the other. Self-realisation is not, however, only attained through the power of language. While language is crucial, it must be consolidated with nonverbal messages in dialogical communication. While Butler spoke exclusively of gender, she asserted that “the self is not only irretrievably ‘outside’, constituted in social discourse, but the ascription of interiority is itself a publicly regulated and sanctioned form of essence fabrication” (Butler 1988: 528).

The idea of performativity is thus undergirded by a hegemonic social discourse that is acted out by the participants, while the idea of self-realisation is conditioned by a particular social discourse. The problem of recognition theory is that neither Honneth nor Taylor have defined what the “good life”, which accompanies fully attained self-subjectivity, consists of (Fraser 2001). In the particular context of *jōsei-muke* media contents, I would suggest that the “good life” for women is to achieve male attention and to have men become agents of their physical or emotional pleasure and satisfaction. Furthermore, the significant point here is that the particular discourse that appears in *jōsei-muke* media is a staged “performance”. Contrast to Honneth, Taylor and Washida, who have conceived of recognition as a macro-phenomenon that pervades society and takes place only as a reciprocal phenomenon, this suggests that performative recognition can take place, as it does here, along a power differential. The exchange of recognition appears reciprocal, but the motivation for giving and receiving recognition between fans and *eromen* and *lovemen* is different. Female fans receive recognition for a fully attained self as a woman, while for *eromen* and *lovemen* it is about earning money

and fame. Self-realisation through such consumption of social relations is, I would call, commodified recognition. The point will be elaborated in the following chapters. The chapter now focuses on the details of the event to examine how the fan community is shaped and creates boundaries among fans.

Between Fans: Hostile and Hospitable

The uniqueness of LOFT is based on it being an event venue with food and drink service, where people can enjoy themselves while watching shows. The members of the audience normally buy drinks and food at the table and from their second order onwards, they get tickets for the lottery at the end of the event. Those tickets are put in four different boxes according to each *eromen* so that fans can receive gifts from their favorite ones. Each *eromen* had their original drinks, alcoholic and non-alcoholic; vodka and orange juice/orange juice for Mukai, Malibu coke/coke for Azuma, shōchū and lemon/lemonade for Uehara, and cherry coke/cherry soda for Kitano. I ordered a coke for Azuma, and it appeared that most people here were having Kitano's drink. That showed the great popularity of Kitano at this event. At my table, Eriko was having Kitano's drink while Chihiro had Mukai's.

Given the opportunity to join the lottery, this presumably results from a business collaboration of SOD and LOFT. The idea behind it is that the more food or drinks you purchase, the more likely you are to win the lottery later at the event to win *eromen*-related materials. Simultaneously, the purchase of *eromen*'s original drinks signifies a performance of affection for one's favorite even though it is superficially set for commercial purposes. Purchasing such drinks can be a sign of alliance and sometimes an occasion for hostility among fans as by the drinks everyone can recognize who is whose fan. This creates symbolic dynamics among fans. Fans' creation of identity is explained by "competitive performativity" which Brittany Tinaliga (2018) in her study of K-Pop fandoms has defined as "essentially where fans of certain idol groups engage in activities online and offline that put them on the offensive and/or defensive role specifically in regards to their idols' and fandoms' image and success" (2018:9).

Tinaliga also has indicated sub-categories of "competitive performativity" in different fan practices; inter-fandom, fandom-fandom, and fandom-outer competitions. Not to confuse, fandom here signifies a group of fans of each *eromen* and *lovemen*. Inter-fandom competition according to Tinaliga is a fan practice that involves monitoring each other and defending idols' good images. Additionally, I would argue that fans compete for years of supporting and

contributions; that is, attending as many events as possible, purchasing merchandise, and being remembered by each *eromen* and *lovemen*. Fandom-fandom is a competition or defense from one whole fandom to another. As we saw in how fans create their Twitter accounts, the semi-public statement of “whose fan I am” is a label to throw themselves into a wider competition with other fans. Besides, each *eromen* and *lovemen*’s fandom has certain characteristics, assumingly depending on how they present themselves, how much they interact with fans, and simply how popular they are. For instance, fans of Mukai and Uehara are “known” as less confrontational as both of them are popular and fans are aware of their popularity so that they are welcoming to newcomers. On the other hand, the fandom of *Lovemen*, Yoshihiko Arima is “known” for being closed and competitive with each other probably because Arima often organises private events only for members with subscription. Note that “known” here is based on fans’ experience including those in Arima’s fandom. It gives a sense of the complex tensions among fans. And the discussion of the fandom-outer competition is beyond the scope of the argument here as women speaking of sex or porn is still stigmatised in Japan as seen in a previous section of Twitter use.

“I sometimes think female fans are imagining themselves as *eromen* or *lovemen*’s girlfriends”, said Yuto over coffee, a couple of days after my first visit to *eromen* event. Yuto was an early career employee at SOD who often helped organising fan events of both male and female AV actors. I asked him what difference *eromen* and *lovemen* had from female AV actors’ events for male fans. “Male fans attending female AV actors’ events are more like ‘supporting’ idols together with other fans. Physical contacts are prohibited at female AV actors’ events, while it is not at *eromen* and *lovemen* events as you might have seen how female fans interact with *eromen* and *lovemen*”, explained Yuto.

The most exciting part of the SOD events, it is always when fans have intimate private moments with *eromen* and *lovemen*, by shaking hands, taking photos, and even hugging. The amount of time for each fan is limited and only lasts a few seconds; however, according to Yuto, there are always complaints from fans claiming a lack of equality: “You know, when fans queue up for the line for each *eromen* and *lovemen*, they can also see how other fans interact with them. Sometimes, some gets upset when they think their time with *eromen* and *lovemen* is shorter than others”. He continued, “Or there are complaints about detailed differences of how *eromen* and *lovemen* treat fans, like how they look more intimate with a specific fan compared to others. I mean, *eromen* and *lovemen* are professionals so that I don’t think that is the case though”. I had to consider twice why Yuto used the word “girlfriend”. “Competitive performance” among fans in Tinaliga (2018) functions based on the idea of

“supporting” a specific idol together with other fans to maintain the good image of the idol. Instead, *eromen* and *lovemen* fans are more individualistic as they compete over how they interact with *eromen* and *lovemen*. This competition among fans can sometimes turn ugly, especially when it involves bullying.

Here is the story of one of my informants. Hanako, a 20 years old studying design at university, admired Arima. Arima’s events were exclusive to members with a monthly subscription so that fans were static and the relationship between Arima and fans was intense compared to other fandoms of *eromen* and *lovemen*. Hanako told me while having lunch together, “I am so scared of older women in the fan community. They are so manipulative and tell me what to do all the time as I am the youngest in the group”. I asked her in detail how these old women were treating Hanako. “I am a virgin and have no experience of romantic relationships. These old women, especially those who work in the sex industry, treat me like a child, as if I were too naïve. Yes, I may lack experience with men but they don’t deserve to say they are better treating men when they are single *obasan* in their late 30s”, said Hanako while sipping a glass of soda. She looked upset but desperate as she had been seeking for an opportunity to disclose her complains. Then she told me about a specific event of Arima, for which she drew a portrait of Arima and posted on Twitter. “Arima-kun shared the portrait on Twitter and praised me for that. I was so happy as never before. But when these *obasan* found it out, they started to ignore me completely”. I did not understand immediately and she continued, “One of them, the leader, told me that I was trying to catch Arima’s attention without her permission. Why do I need to get her permission? I did it because I thought that would be nice. I like Arima-kun so much but cannot put up with all this drama anymore”. I told her not to be overly worried about this bully. But I remember thinking how confusing and ridiculous it must have felt to be bullied as in high school by women in their 30s.

Parallel to Yuto’s comments on fans’ behaviors as “*eromen* or *lovemen*’s girlfriend”, Hanako’s story reveals that the competition between fans is based on how much recognitions each fan receives from *eromen* or *lovemen*. That also points towards how female subjectivity centers on male presence (see Chapter 4). In a sense, the creation of heterosexual male/female subjectivity is based on “othering” its counterpart; to be female is to belong to men, and to be male is to exclude women.

Simultaneously, in Japanese discourse the female homosocial realm is often known for *maunntingû* (Japanese pronunciation for “mounting”). This is also repeated in the conversation with Hanako, as in the way that “*Obasa ni maunntingû sareru*” (I receive mounting by *obasan*) The term “mounting” is a Japanese slang and originally indicates the way that animals present

themselves bigger than their counterparts to show superiority. The term first appeared in an essay co-written by Kamiko Inuyama and Yukari Takinami, *Onna wa Egao de Naguriau Maunntingû Joshi no Jittai* (Women Fighting with Smiles, Facts about Mounting Girls) in 2014 to illustrate different types of *maunntingû* which often occurred in women's awkward conversations. Female competitions here are often based on social status such as success in her (and partner/husband's) career, married or in a relationship, or living in an urban area. The point is, these aspects are highly gendered in the sense that female "success" cannot be achieved by women alone but it has to be associated with male existence. The older women's "friendly" advice of how to dress up seductively or how to treat men in bed implies that these women feel to have superiority over Hanako, competing for male attentions or experience with men. Female homosociality in this context therefore is performative competition over male recognition with each other. Even though female fans appear to hang out often and to get along well with each other, there is constant *maunntingû*. However, as Yuto has pointed out, *eromen* and *lovemen* are professional idols and there should not be any hierarchy or favorites among fans that are set by them. They should treat fans equally as every fan is an important client. Fans also should be aware of this premise as a common understanding. The following chapter will examine the feeling of "authenticity" concerning the fantasy aspects of the fan community.

"Bounded Authenticity" in *Virtuality*

Hanako told me, "I think of Arima as my older brother as he always cares for me and gives me good advice". I was a little bit surprised to know how intimate she feels about her relationship with Arima. It might have sounded mean and bitter but I could not help asking her monthly "investment" for Arima. "I know it costs me a lot. I sometimes use more than 200,000 JPY⁸⁶ a month for purchasing his DVDs, attending every event including private ones. But I think it's worth it", she said to me with a smile, confidently. 200,000 JPY is a lot of money especially considering Hanako is a university student working as a part-time waitress in a café. While my brain was busy with calculating her monthly income and outcome, she continued: "Supporting Arima is the only thing I do apart from studying. My relationship with him is something more than an idol/fan. I need him in my life". Listening to her enthusiastic speech, I came to conclude that it is not just about money but the "authentic" feeling which Hanako receives from interactions with Arima.

⁸⁶ 1250GBP(1GBP=160JPY).

I would suggest that fans' authentic feeling of recognition is a result of "bounded authenticity", in the context of Elizabeth Bernstein's definition (2007). In her analysis of sex workers, Bernstein has argued that sex workers at the American sex workers' rights organisation, COYOTE (Call Off Your Old Tired Ethics), described their professional experience as an authentic experience achieved by a "single self"; they did not see themselves as having a "double self" that consisted of a "front" and a "backstage". As she noted, this stands in contrast to the view of the majority of streetwalkers, who explained how they distinguished their emotional engagement in sex work from their private sex lives, through having "double selves". Bernstein has argued that commodified intimacy is intimacy that is a part of people's authentic experience, and is different from having a "double self", which involves drawing a distinction between "private" and "commodified" intimacy. The distinction lies in a binary opposition between the authentic and the artificial, between single and double, and between private and commodified. Bernstein's bases her argument on the fact that almost every COYOTE sex worker identified as polyamorous, non-binary and non-monogamist; therefore, sexual interaction with multiple people did not divide the perception of self – not professionally and not privately. However, in the Japanese context at least (and perhaps elsewhere) it is important to bear in mind that the perception of the "self" is very much relational; this means that the perception of the "self" is constantly – and often quite consciously – in the process of being reshaped in different social settings (Kondo 1990; Rosenberger 1992; Lebra 2004; Kimura 2005). Returning to recognition theory, it could be argued that different "selves" appears in various settings, depending on the sociocultural environment. Thus, in a sense the point is not whether fantasy is pitched against reality, or private against public. The point is that society – in Japan, and, in fact, everywhere – is built upon an assemblage of different social settings, to which we all constantly adjust and adapt according to different motivations and values. Therefore, the question is, in fact, what female fans actually do in different settings – rather than what "bounded authenticity" means to them.

Considering Hanako's story, there are clearly developing emotional attachments to *eromen* and *lovemen* among fans. Each of them was developing a certain emotional attachment with their favorite *eromen* and *lovemen* through their attendance in various kinds of events. The question here is why these women continue to commit, invest, and support *eromen* and *lovemen* when they know that neither of them is going to be an *eromen* and *lovemen*'s girlfriend. As in the nature of *oshi-katsu*, or so to say "supporting activity", I would argue that female fans gain self-reassiation and the sense of belonging through the act of support (*ouen-suru*). In other words, female fans at *eromen* and *lovemen* events are not looking for a specific boyfriend but

for a place where they can feel at ease. What has brought them together is affection and curiosity towards *eromen* and *lovemen* on one hand, and a desire to feel a sense of belonging to this fan community, out of their sexual fantasy. By sharing the same moment of excitement with other female fans, I strongly felt a sense of community, even it could be hostile sometimes, in which those fans through their shared enthusiasm. That means that female fans develop a certain attachment to the community as well as to their favorite *eromen* and *lovemen*. The sexually open atmosphere of the event seemed surreal to me, especially in Japan where there is still a stigma around women speaking about sex in public. In a sense, this community set up by SOD provides a sanctuary for women to speak about sex without the fear of judgment. However, the question remains: what are they looking for in this safe place?

Given the fact that an event like this is a highly choreographed space in which both the men who perform and the female fans who consume have clear roles to play – even down to detail such as Hanako considering herself as *lovemen*'s little sister– the fan community of *eromen* and *lovemen* is best understood as a ritualistic place that is separated from the norms of social life in Japan. This is what Bruce Kapferer describes as *virtuality*, as discussed in association of Twitter use. In defining the concept of *virtuality*, Kapferer referred to Victor Turner's concept of liminality. In his classic anthropological study of ritual, Victor Turner (2017 [1969]) defined the ambiguous and indeterminate characteristics of persons in initiation rituals as "liminal", in the sense that "liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial" (ibid.: 95). In other words, liminal space and so-called "reality" are mutually constituted. Therefore, the *virtuality* to which Kapferer is referring is to be understood as a kind of social bubble which is part of a wider social ecology in which people display different aspects of their selves. Although Turner's primary focus was religious rituals, I feel that the idea of the liminal, as well as Kapferer's idea of *virtuality*, are relevant to the context on which I focus here, which eliminates certain pre-existing social norms, rules and discourse by artificially creating unique social settings.

People join liminal spaces to overcome a certain fear of reality or to avoid the problems that they face in reality; they are seeking a "liminoid" moment. Turner (2011 [1974]) has used the term "liminoid" to refer to a liminal phase that does not necessarily relate to the resolution of personal crisis; it is one that is a form of play and an escape from reality. The liminoid space provides a level of ambiguity as well as safe space; there is a promise that anything that happens in the liminal space stays there. The theoretical premise is that those who have entered liminal space return to social reality with a sense of resolution or at least with a certain emotional or

physical development. This process is applicable to the fans of *eromen* and *lovemen*. Eriko's and Chihiro's experiences indicate that female fans' support for *eromen* (or *lovemen*) results from a desire to have a safe place in which they feel flattered, and to gain recognition for their femininity in exchange for financial support. They enter a liminoid space in which fans can play and, for a while, forget the problems they have outside the fantasy world; and in which they can feel excitement and fulfilment in a place that is separated from ordinary reality. It should be borne in mind, however, that this does not mean that what the women feel is not real.

In a sense, those events, the existence of fan community, and their ability to have intimate moments with *eromen* and *lovemen* functions as a safe liminal space in which there is no risk of rejection. The communication with *eromen* and *lovemen* provides fans with social recognition. "Bounded authenticity" here provides a sense of overcoming their own fears regardless of the transitory and commodified nature of the experience. The level of "bounded authentic" intimacy is certainly depending on the frequency of purchase, visiting venues and events and applying for exclusive dates. However, as long as they are willing to pay extra, fans can achieve more heterosexual attentions. Good looking men, *eromen* and *lovemen*, showering them with compliments and recognition; so that fan can achieve self-realisation. However, the significant point of this fandom of *eromen* and *lovemen* is that most fans never leave this liminal/liminoid space. Instead, they are likely to invest more money as they commit to the fandom because of the satisfactory feelings which they receive from *eromen* and *lovemen*. In this way, commodified recognition is a well-thought out business model. Having a huge gap between reality and their interaction with *eromen* and *lovemen*, it is difficult for fans to adjust to their cognitive understanding of intimacy, where in Japan which still exerts a high degree of pressure on women through widely disseminated standardised views for marriage, love, and romantic relationships.

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated the construction of the identity of female fans of *eromen* and *lovemen* in a unique social setting of the fan community and asked how female fans perform and practice their femininity in relation to the interaction with *eromen* and *lovemen* and other fans. The ethnographic description has shown that women from different age groups and occupations gather and collectively support their favourite *eromen* and *lovemen*, as a form of *oshi-katsu*. As a community, there was a certain sense of belongingness and as a result, that

created a safe space for women to talk about their sexual desires openly without any external judgment.

The liminality of the fan community, in other words, *sabukaru* realm creates the spatial element of the *eromen* and *lovemen* event: that is remote from any social practice of everydayness and authoritarian ideology. This sense of remoteness is a conjuncture of SOD's creation and each fans' collective wills, which echoes Lefebvre's definition of the third space. Simultaneously, the pseudonymous use of Twitter accounts contributes to the creation of a liminal social setting of the fan community, which I have employed *virtuality* of Kapferer's definition. As a premise, the fan community of *eromen* and *lovemen* should be understood as a parallel to fan's everyday lives. Considering any social identity is constantly constituted in exchange as Washida's theory on "face", the fan community of *eromen* and *lovemen* is a milieu where female fans assemble with a face of the same interests and enthusiasm for *eromen* and *lovemen*. I emphasise that the unique atmosphere of the community is spontaneous chemistry of SOD's ideological implementation as a mode of production for the sanctuary for women speaking sexual desire and female fans who actively commit to the community.

The comments of Eriko and Chihiro have demonstrated that female fans visit to *eromen* and *lovemen* events in order to restore their femininity through the interaction with them. The idea is that the "self" is continuously built upon recognition from others – not only through language but also through nonverbal messages in dialogical communication. A fully attained self is based on performativity; thus, it is a hegemonic discourse on social norms that we continuously reproduce by our behaviours. In the specific context of *jōsei-muke* AVs, a certain archetype of gender performance is provided: women achieve male attention while men become the agents of their physical or emotional pleasure and satisfaction. This is the performance structure of SOD's fantasy products.

This chapter has then followed to see how female fans practice and perform fan activity associated with each other. "Competitive performativity" of each fan starts with the statement of "whose fan I am", which has been easily observed by each *eromen* thematised drinks each fan purchase at the event. Each *eromen* and *lovemen*'s fandom has a particular image that is created by fans. As in the case of Hanako, the fandom itself can be hostile internally. This is I use the Japanese slung *maunntingū* to indicate female competitions over "success" with any situation accompanied by male existence. *Maunntingū* happens in the fan community for the reason that the intimate feeling which they receive from *eromen* and *lovemen* is authentic, at least for them. More importantly, the fantasy which *eromen* and *lovemen* provides never fails to serve what female fans craving for without any risks of rejections which often happens in

the realm of non-commodified love. While the liminal/liminoid space which SOD provides is no more than a fan meeting service. The different degrees of financial and emotional investments depend on how fans engage with this fandom. This might be a result of the gendered structural system in contemporary Japanese society, where Japanese women are constantly being objectified and threatened by the pressure to belong to someone. It is also because all attentions from *eromen* and *lovemen* validate fans' self-recognition whereas it is often difficult in "reality" by their own terms. The following chapters will then address how female fans act out their sexual desires and how difficult it is to adjust them to the Japanese relationship or marriage market in which politics is highly gendered.

Chapter 6 Fans' Consumption of Sex: The Question for Sex Positivism

Introduction

“I have never tried sex toys by myself. I wonder, if I got too used to masturbation, would I receive sexual orgasm with men? So, I would rather have sex with men!”, said Yoshiko while window-shopping at sex toy shop in Shinjuku, Tokyo. Yoshiko is a female fan whom I have met through a mutual friend. We became instantly close to each other as sharing interests in *jōsei-muke* AVs. As a single mid-30s office worker, she thought I would be the only one whom she could talk about her interests in sex-related subject (see Chapter 5 for the difficulty most Japanese women have in talking about sex-related subject).

One corner of the sex shop was full of vibrators and dildos which were presumably designed for female self-pleasure. This was obvious from the way they were displayed with pastel coloured advertisements saying “A new beginning of pleasure for women”. In 2013, Japanese male masturbation aids company TENGA produced a female product line, *iroha* which emphasised female self-pleasure products “created by women for women”. These female masturbation aids products were displayed next to products such as body scrubs for delicate zone and vaginal hygiene products as if they were parts of female self-care routine. When the official store of *iroha* opened in 2018 only for four weeks inside the department store in Osaka, it became sensational and positively received by major mass media (Mokuta 2018, Kobayashi 2018), reaching three times of the sales goal.

The sex shop which Yoshiko and I went was a “classic” one with a curtain at the front saying “no enter below 18 years old” and main customers there was men. After a few drinks of catching up, we decided to explore sex shops in Shinjuku as this was Yoshiko’s suggestion. As two women, it required a bit of courage to enter the shop. It was Yoshiko’s first time to enter such a shop but she seemed curious surrounded by a huge amounts of sex toys. Assumingly due to the recent success of *iroha*, the shop also had a corner which was entirely designed for female customers. By picking up a few sample vibrators and dildos from the rack, I asked Yoshiko what kinds of sex toy she thought would fit her taste. Although she seemed curiously excited, Yoshiko was hesitant. Her hands were even shaking while touching smooth texture of the egg-shaped vibrator. It was my mistake to instantly assume that Yoshiko, as a fan of *jōsei-muke* AVs, was familiar with masturbation on daily basis. As it was premised, I asked her “don’t you take care of yourself while watching AV?”. She told me that she never did masturbation; moreover, “I don’t know how to touch my vagina. It’s kind of scary”.

As I recall that moment, it also reminds me of the longitudinal tradition of the argument of pornography in or outside academia has been debating whether pornography is harmful (mainly for women) or not. But the premise always has been bodily sensation which pornography induce to the viewer: in other words, carnal resonance (Paasonen 2010 see more Chapter 1). As is often premised, pornography as a masturbatory tool is taken for granted not only among scholars but also among the public, which also forms the basis of the argument of psychological effects on viewers. This is the reason of my next question to Yoshiko, “what you do with DVDs you have bought?”. In my mind, there was a speculation which female viewers of *jôsei-muke* AVs being “turned on” by its contents and masturbating in a private sphere. Yoshiko answered, “I just buy several DVDs in order to get tokens for fan meetings but never watch them. I can’t watch my *oshi* (favorite *eromen*) having sex with another woman! I know they are actors, but that would make me jealous...”. While nodding to her, I was trying to understand what she has said. My instantaneous hypnosis here was that Yoshiko was not a fan of *jôsei-muke* AVs itself but a fan of a specific *eromen*. Later in other days, I asked similar question to other interlocutors, Hanako (see her story in Chapter 5) who was heavily involved in the fan community of Arima, one of the most popular *lovemen* at that time. Hanako then told me, “I don’t know how to masturbate so I don’t. Of course, I have seen sex toys like dildos and vibrators. But I can’t believe myself putting such toys in my vagina. I’m very scared. I am virgin so don’t want to harm my vagina. The first time should be with someone like Arima-kun who knows female body so well” while blushing.

Such comments of Yoshiko and Hanako above demonstrates that their purpose of fan practice is resulted from the desire to enjoy fantasy which *eromen* and *lovemen* embody. However, the crucial point here is that they conceive *eromen* and *lovemen* as ideal boyfriends. As such, sex on screen is not their main concern; rather, it is understood as one of practice accompanying romantic relationship⁸⁷. Despite of the label of AVs or pornography, female fans’ consumption of *jôsei-muke* AVs is not necessarily associated with carnal resonance⁸⁸. Rather, the way female fans consume *jôsei-muke* AVs is to show their support for their own favorite *eromen* and *lovemen*. Their main purpose is to interact with them and feel femininity. The current sex positive feminism, calling the importance of “women enjoying sex” as exemplified by the TENGA’s female product line above, it is worth questioning how the

⁸⁷ SILK LABO films focus on the process of “how a couple end up making love” according to Makino (see Chapter 2).

⁸⁸ There is certainly the possibility of female, male, or in-between user masturbating with *jôsei-muke* AVs. However, please note this chapter corresponds with the focus group of female fans of *eromen* and *lovemen*.

statement is articulated and received (or not) by female fans. Together with the emergence of *jōsei-muke* AVs and sex toys for female self-pleasure, there are now *jōsei-muke fūzoku* shops which women purchase sexual service by male therapists. From a perspective of infrastructure, it is fair enough to say that there are rich opportunities for women to enjoy sex.

This chapter therefore first explores the recent trend of sex positive attitude for women in relation to the rise of variety of sex related industry for women, which SOD's *jōsei-muke* production lines collaborates as a business model. With ethnographic descriptions at SOD's *Ikemen* (literally, good looking men) Festival which has showcased different sex industry for women at SOD office, I will examine interlocutors' comments or reactions to sex positive discourse. Ultimately my aim here is to demonstrate how female fans' consumption of *jōsei-muke* products and services does or does not correspond with a discourse which the industry conveys.

Sexual Services for Women: *Jōsei-muke Fūzoku* and Relaxation

In a line of *jōsei-muke* adult services, I have mentioned that SOD has been actively collaborating with sex toy shops and female escort services, namely *jōsei-muke fūzoku*. In the past five years, the numbers of *jōsei-muke fūzoku* shops has been increasing. There are more than 300 shops across Japan and monthly visits to the informational website of *jōsei-muke fūzoku* has reached 300,000 in 2018 which is as seven times as that is in 2015 (Hara 2018). The word *fūzoku* originally signifies manners and customs in a broad term to accommodate any contemporary mass culture. In the legal term, *fūzoku* stands for business offering food and entertainment, sex industry, and business selling alcohol after midnight. That is, for instance, host/hostess club, bar, night clubs, pachinko⁸⁹, mahjong parlours, sex shop, and AV shops. Due to the nature of age restriction, I believe the word “adult industry” is appropriate here. *Fūzoku*, however, connotes sex related business due to the vast variety of business which offers sexual service⁹⁰. I would use the term to signify escort service as it is a service which *jōsei-muke fūzoku* provides.

There has been always female clientele for male escort services. For instance, *urisen* boys (male homosexual escorts) sometimes take female customers. There was also a *sōpu rando*

⁸⁹ Pachinko is a mechanical slot machine game that is used for gambling device. Since gambling is illegal in Japan, people receive vouchers according to pachinko balls they win at the pachinko shop. These tokens are exchanged for money or prizes at prize exchange shops.

⁹⁰ Since the trade of penile-vagile penetration is illegal in Japan, there are various form of sexual service such as no-underwear café, hand-job salon, soap land which offers washing body with erotic massage.

(soap land)⁹¹for women in Sapporo, Hokkaido in 1981 but it was closed in six months since opening (Nakashio 2018). However, the difficulty of *fūzoku* for women is that it is hard for men to erect and ejaculate multiple times per day. Simultaneously, the market itself was unbalanced as there were more male job applicants for *jōsei-muke fūzoku* compared to the amounts of female demands. Instead of establishing physical service spaces in store⁹² for female clients, “delivery” style has become common on this regard. That is, female clients can invite them to private space, house or hotel and have an intimate time with them. As a comedian, Tomomi Sekiya has openly spoke of her positive experience at *jōsei-muke fūzoku*⁹³, it gains mass media attentions. According to a journalist Hara (2018), the reason behind its popularity underlies the rise of women’s average income as well as unmarried rates, which results in higher mental stress among working women. There is therefore a demand for women’s relaxation. *Josei-muke fūzoku*, in a sense, could be understood as a part of beauty industry such as nailcare, hair-cut, and relaxational massage.

While *jōsei-muke fūzoku* is an umbrella term for adult industry for women, the major business model put a lot of emphasis on massage aspects as male sex workers are described as “therapists”. That is, female client receives erotic massage by a therapist in a hotel⁹⁴ or private house. In theory, this is massage service as penile-vagile penetration is prohibited by the law; however, anything apart from the penetration can be offered according to clients’ demands from kiss, fingering to oral sex. The term *jōsei-muke fūzoku* also includes female homosexual service, often known as lesbian *fūzoku*, the clientele of lesbian *fūzoku* is not homosexual women but it is also popular for women who feel uncomfortable with a male sex worker.

During my first visit to one of *Josei-muke fūzoku* shops, a female business owner of SPA group, Asuka explained to me that her main business goal is to provide women with a sanctuary from stressful daily lives. Asuka, whom I had contacted for an interview regarding *jōsei-muke fūzoku* as a part of *jōsei-muke* adult industry, insisted of me receiving the full service as she said “It’s better to try if you want to know what we provide”. Before going to love hotel with

⁹¹ *Sōpu rando* (soap land) is where people receive body washing service as well as erotic massage, which is often accompanied by penile-vagile penetration. This is also considered “*jiyū renai* (non-commodified love)” between the service provider and the customer.

⁹² As in the same way with massage salons. *Fūzoku shops* for men have such a business style, known as *tempo-gata* (as *tempo* is a store, and *gata* is a form).

⁹³ “*Toriaezu Yaritai. Kimotsi yoku Naritai Toki ha Yasui Tokoro he Icchau*” *Josei Senyou Fuzoku Heavy User no Kokuhaku* (“I Just Want to Have Sex. Looking for A Cheap Place for Pleasure” Confession of A Heavy User of Brothel for Women), 2018 August 16th, Abema Times. Available at: <https://times.abema.tv/articles/-/4738901> [Accessed 20 April 2022].

⁹⁴ Love hotel is often chosen for this purpose as it is rentable from an hour. Love hotel is a type of hotel that is designed for couples with a double-sized bed, a spacious bathroom, and two condoms.

my temporarily company, Asuka and I were sitting in a café for interview in Shinjuku. Asuka, the same age with me (born in 1992), studied esthetic massage in a collage and worked in pink salons⁹⁵ at that same time. After discovering *jōsei-muke fūzoku* herself, she then decided to join *jōsei-muke fūzoku* industry by combining her skills as an aesthetician and a sex worker. She told me while slipping a glass of iced coffee, “Hunting male therapists is extremely difficult. We have more than 300 applications per month but only one or nothing can make it to the actual job.” In *jōsei-muke fūzoku* industry, male sex workers are called “therapist” as their main job is to give relaxational and/or erotic massage as well as sexual plays. This is assumingly resulting from the word “therapist” does not signify erotic or sexual connotation so it is more approachable for women, especially women buying sexual play is yet not common.

I asked her what kinds of men apply to become male therapists. After choosing her words carefully, Asuka replied, “There are three types of men applying for this job. Mostly, some just want to touch female bodies, others want to improve their sexual techniques. It is rare to find men who want to serve women because of their previous experience with women. When we found that kind of men, we’ll have deep discussions with them about female sexuality and then decide whether take them or not. They have to be professional, not harming women is fundamental; rather they have to encourage female pleasure not only sexually but also mentally”. According to Asuka, they also have to pay for mandatory lessons to learn massage techniques as well as how to treat women in a good manner. In contrast to the cliché that sex work for women is to earn a lot of money in a short term, male sex workers for women are required to put proper effort into being good looking, techniques, and professional attitude. “It is very important to make sure that every process of our service is comfortable for female clients. I never want women to feel taken advantage of at any point of our service”, said Asuka. I have found that her perfectionistic professionalism is inherited by each male sex worker in SPA group.

The male sex worker, Toshio who was appointed to me was the most popular one among other in SPA group at that time. He was in late-20s, more than 180cm (exceedingly tall compared to the average Japanese men), wearing a tight grey suit, looking like a famous TV celebrity in Japan. Toshio joined us while I was still interviewing Asuka in café. “Very nice to see you. I’ve heard of your research and it seems interesting. Hope I could be of assistance?”, he said with a charming smile on his face. Although trying to maintain a business-like attitude, I was blushing. Leaving the café and Asuka, we walked towards the district nearby in which

⁹⁵ A genre of *fūzoku* shop for men which provides hand job service.

love hotels were concentrated in Kabuki-chō. Toshio suddenly turned me and said “I know you are here today for research purpose. But please let me lead this moment with you. May I hold your hand?”. I nodded and he calmly held my shaky left hand. We looked like a couple on the street of Shinjuku even though it was only temporarily. Struggling with the inner conflict of myself as a researcher and a woman, I let myself flow in the moment.

Choosing a reasonably priced one among those love hotels, Toshio and I entered the room with a double-sized bed, a sofa alongside with a small coffee table, and a spacious bathroom. Sitting on the sofa together next to each other, Toshio handed me a A4 sized paper of “counselling paper” which was a questionnaire of my body condition, where to and not to be touched, and what kinds of atmosphere I wanted. Toshio suggested me to go through these questions together with him in order to make sure there was consent between us. Due to the current climate of feminism, sexual consent is very important. Here I saw Asuka’s female-friendly professionalism that makes sure what a female customer demand. After filling the form, Toshio handed me a towel, a bathrobe, and a paper-made pantie and asked me to take a bath. “Please make yourself relaxed in bathtub. I’ll prepare the bed during then”, said Toshio. After taking a quick bath, I returned to the bed only wearing bathrobe and a pantie. Toshio asked me to lay down on the bed and relax, then went to the bathroom himself. The whole process until then was so smoothly and systematic that I did not feel nervous at all.

However, the moment Toshio appeared from the bathroom only with bathrobe and underwear, I heard the sound of my heart beating. “May I lay down next to you?”, he asked me gently. I nodded and he lay down next to me. “Are you nervous? May I hug you?”, he said in a gentle voice. I just nodded and kept my head down with him hugging me softly. He started chatting, assumingly for the sake of breaking the ice. Somehow, I realised that there was a nice smell, so I asked him. “I put aromatic oil on the bedsheet. Do you like it? I’m going to use this for massage as well”, said Toshio. He then asked me to lay on my face and started massaging my back with aromatic oil. As it was so relaxing, I closed my eyes and fell asleep for a little while. A while after, he asked me to lay on my back. While massaging my shoulders, his hands went down to my breasts, and then further to the most sensitive area. As he was doing so, Toshio constantly asked for my consent. I do not remember how long it was; however, his gentle movement was so satisfactory. This latter part of the massage was more sexual than expected. I became completely naked by then. Although he was still wearing an underwear, I could sense his erection. After the whole procedure of the “massage”, we were then back to hugging.

What was interesting here was that there was no feeling of heterosexual power dynamics. Despite the fact that it was Toshio who did all the aspect of sexual actions, I never felt exploited or objectified by him (very different thus from the mainstream AVs for men). Rather, the whole atmosphere with warm lighting (which I suspect Toshio orchestrated) embodied the conventional fantasy of *jōsei-muke* AVs, which reminded me of Makino's emphasis on the word *iyashi*, or relaxation (see Chapter 4). I therefore asked him what his motivation was for doing this. Toshio told me, "I like serving women to get relaxed, as I believe most women these days are having a lot of stress in their daily lives". Later while chatting with him, I discovered that Toshio used to play the role of a masochistic servant for a female dominatrix in the past. In this sense, it might be understandable that Toshio was trained and able not to show his egoistic manner and to remain focused on "serving" women. Nonetheless, I started to wonder about this mantra of "women's relaxation", or *iyashi* in Japanese, in the sex industry for women, not only in *jōsei-muke fūzoku* but also as it appeared in *jōsei-muke* AVs (see Chapter 4 and 5). The questions arose here are: why could it not simply be women enjoying sexuality? And why does this have to come with the sense of "relaxation"?

Women's Online Feminism and the Sex Positive Discourse

The mantra of women's relaxation in relation to women's sexual health is widely spread in social media as a part of the recent online feminism movement in Japan. As mentioned in Chapter 5, the use of social media, especially Twitter has been an important role for female fans to connect with each other. Simultaneously, Twitter also has been a platform for Japanese women to express their opinions regarding gender and sexuality, commonly known as *twit-femi* (in short of Twitter feminism) (Sakatsume 2020). Before straightforwardly discussing women's sex positive feminism, I will draw characteristics of the current online feminism in Japan.

A sociologist, Tohko Tanaka (2013) has argued that the significance of online platform for feminism underlies the collectivity of anonymous voices who have similar opinions, which contrast to the idea that values individual particular experts. Drawing Nancy Fraser's (1990) critiques on Habermasian idea of the public sphere⁹⁶, Tanaka saw the potentiality of online feminism movement as an alternative to the mainstream mass media. As examples, the protest against mandatory high heel policy in workplace started by Yumi Ishikawa in 2019 became social phenomenon. This protest #Kutoo (the name is reference to #Metoo and Kutû is a

⁹⁶ Fraser criticised Habermas's idea of the public sphere in which individuals with common interests assemble and deliberate their discussion was exclusive to women.

Japanese term for shoes) was against the fact that there were some workplace has a gendered dress code which requires women to wear high heels (Rachelle 2019). Ishikawa claimed that this gendered dress code was no fair and wearing high heels for long hours would cause health issues on Twitter. Her tweet was retweeted and shared more than thousands of times, which eventually became a matter of Ministry of Health, Labor, and Care. Simultaneously, when Yoshiro Mori, a former prime minister of Japan and the head of organising committee of the 2020 Summer Olympics and Paralympics, made a comment in February 2021 that women's participation in meeting would take long as women spoke too much, he was first heavily criticised by online feminists on Twitter then later by international reputations. Mori then resigned the head of Olympic and Paralympic committee⁹⁷. These two examples demonstrate success of social influence initiated by online feminists' mobilisation. As Tanaka foresaw, online feminism now has a bottom up influence to the mainstream politics although it should be supported by external reputations such as public opinion leaders and international commentary. Despite of its significance, online feminists are not always supported and well-received; rather it often creates controversy.

Twit-femi is the word to indicate feminists who are vocal on Twitter but also has a bad connotation of “angry women”, as Shingo Sakatsume (2020), a social activist has argued. Sakatsume defines *twi-femi* as those who self-identify feminists and constantly tweet hateful criticism against men on Twitter. And their accounts are often remarkable by emoji of shoe wear which indicates their resonance to #Kuttoo and/or shrimps (In Japanese shrimps is *ebi*. This there is used for a metaphor of “evil” dence) which suggest that their voices are based on their personal experience of sexism from men. There on contrary hateful misogynist male voices on Twitter, fighting against these *twit-femi*. Twitter, in this sense, is a battlefield between men and women. They attack on each other for various subjects. According to Sakatsume, this everlasting war is not for deliberating these opposite standing points rather self-serving for the sake of releasing one's stress. In his analysis, it is an addiction caused by

⁹⁷ Mori Yoshirou Kaicho ni Tokyo Gorin Soshiki Iinchō no Jinin Motomeru Koe ga Zokuzoku. “#Mori Yoshiro ha Intai shitekudasai” ga Twitter de Hirogaru (Increasing Voices for Yoshirou Mori for Resigning from Tokyo Olympics Chef “#Mori Yoshiro Should Resign” Thriving on Twitter), 2021 February 4th, HuffPost. Available at: https://www.huffingtonpost.jp/entry/story_jp_601b3572c5b6c0af54d0971b?ncid=tweetlnkjphpmg00000001 [Accessed 20 April 2022].

the pathological state of mind which cannot stop tweeting hateful comments to the counterparts. Sakatsume's point, however, might be too pessimistic to picture the whole movement of *twit-femi*. There are possibly those who has become obsessed with the idea of their own version of "feminism". But this is not based on statistical analysis; moreover, it is impossible to archive all the tweets represented as hateful *twit-femi*. What is important here is that women's voice in Japan is now heard and creates social impacts whether it is received positively or negatively.

Returning to the main point, sex education for heterosexual men and women is a part of the whole discussion of online feminism. It is already shown that the beginning of *jōsei-muke* AVs has had an instructional aspect for women which has suggested various ways for women to actively engage with sex in a more comfortable manner. Ittetsu Suzuki, the legendary pioneer of *eromen*, then became an iconic spokesman of "how to have a perfect sex with your male lover", by publishing two books "*Koi ni kiku Sex Serapī (Sex Therapy for a Relationship)*" in 2014 and "*Sex no Hontou (Truth about Sex)*" in 2019. Suzuki (2019) in his second book stated that AVs (for men) is just a fantasy so that it is important not to mimic what happens in the mainstream AVs. According to Suzuki, AVs is a performance to stimulate carnal resonance to the viewer, Misunderstandings about sex between men and women happens, when men believe "fantasy" of AVs and attempt to imitate it. Suzuki's voice here is significant as he is a part of AV industry which creates those sexual fantasy; however, it is also ironic of him saying that most AV is just a fiction when knowing the history of AV trying to be "realistic". Nonetheless, this ethos was shared by online feminists. Especially since 2017 when, a journalist Shiori Ito prosecuted Noriyuki Yamaguchi for quasi-rape, there were many online voices allied with Ito's courageous action as Japanese version of #MeToo (Brasor 2017). This leads to questioning pre-existing depictions in AVs. In November 2018, Chuō University hosted talk event titled *AV no Kyōukashō ni Mono Mousu! (Let's Stop Learning from AVs!)* at campus festival, inviting Ittetsu Suzuki, Shimiken (male AV actor for the mainstream AVs), Mana Sakura (one of the top female AV actor), and Computer Sonoda (a head of adult video production), and Sakiko Enmi, a female gynecologist, which I have attended. The event had more than a thousand of audience, both male and female. The talk itself was mainly about 1) most AVs including *jōsei-muke* are fictional performance⁹⁸ 2) the importance of sexual consent, contraception and sexual transmitted disease. By addressing the myths in AVs such as "feeling (of penetration) is better without condoms" and "when woman says no, that means yes", they discussed the danger which those myths would cause in real life. Despite those seems fundamental knowledge, it

⁹⁸ Although it was advised for men to watch *jōsei-muke* AVs

cannot be forgotten that Japanese education system does not teach teenagers how to have a sex in a safe and comfortable manner. The main stream AVs for men, to some extent, is guilty for showing sex (sometimes violent) without consent and contraption under the name of entertainment. This is therefore necessary for people in the AV industry to claim it is just a fiction and advocate healthier understanding of sex for both men and women. Statements such as “sex is a communication” and “sex should be comfortable and relaxing” are emphasised in order for women not to elude sex. I would argue that such an emphasis on “communication” also links to the idea of *iyashi*, or relaxation as the sense of *iyashi* is built from relationship with an object of desire (I will elaborate this more in Chapter 8).

According to Japan Sex Survey conducted by JEX a Japanese condom company and a general incorporated association Japan Family Planning Association, 56% (out of 2,247) women consider sex as an expression of love, while 69.8% (2,263) men focusing sexual pleasure. Simultaneously, 56.9% men ask for sex themselves but it was only 4% for women. These number demonstrates that many Japanese women still have a hesitation to act actively when it comes to sex. There are however increasing female voices on Twitter that speak of female masturbations and sexual desire as a part of feminists’ movement, *Twit-Femi*. Female workers of TENGA, for instance, advocate female self-pleasure by demonstrating its scientific relation to relaxation. In addition to that, they often intentionally bring the discussion of female self-pleasure while questioning gendered attitudes; that is, it is often considered normal for men to talk masturbation in public while not for women. However, this attitude is often a target of criticism from both men and women. Women talking sex is still labeled as vulgar and sometimes, considered as sexual harassment (Abema Prime 29th November 2020)⁹⁹. Sexual matter is of course a sensitive subject and there has to be a consent when it is discussed; however, the point here is to motivate the acknowledgement of female sexual desire whether it links to relaxation or not. It might be able to argue that such “framing” of female sexual desire as relaxation is a weapon of justification which creates an accessibility for women. And the differentiation from male fantasy of pornographic women who always say “yes” to sexual offers from men. On this regard, it is possible to consider that this current female sex positive movement is the first confront against gendered understanding of sexual desire. Followingly, I will draw an ethnographic analysis of the marketisation of sex positive discourse in sex industry

⁹⁹ There was a discussion on online television, Abema Prime TV regarding this issue on 29th November 2020. Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BZc7-GVTobA&t=424s>. [Accessed 19 April 2022].

for women. The latter part of this chapter will be a specific event on April 2019 which SOD has hosted as a showcase of *jōsei-muke* sex industry.

SOD's *Ikemen* Festival

On April 21st 2019, GIRL'S CH hosted a special event of *jōsei-muke* sex industry, *Ikemen Fes* (in short of Festival) at SOD's office in Nakano. *Ikemen* is a neologism of *iketeru* (cool) and men and signifies good looking boys. The aim of the event was to showcase various kinds of *ikemen* working in different adult industries for women, from *eromen* and *lovemen* to male therapists. As well as to raise awareness of sexual health, self-pleasure, and sexual fetishes by turning the second and the third floor of the office building into the event space. The second-floor displayed stalls of SPA group offering five minutes' hand massage, LOVELY POP a sex toy shop for women, and WILD ONE a vibrator bar¹⁰⁰ in Shibuya, and kinbaku¹⁰¹ photo sessions accompanied by R form Fettes¹⁰², a female fetish idol group, and SOD selling DVDs of *jōsei-muke* AVs. On the third floor, there was the stage for talk events, photobooths for instax pictures with *eromen* and *lovemen*, stalls of *jōsei-muke fūzoku* shops offering a quick massage trial in a private room, and a stall of SOD's original merchandises. As the main event of the day, there would be a contest for the best male therapists at the main stage. From my own perspective, the main difference from monthly *eromen* and *lovemen*'s fan meeting event was the presence of *jōsei-muke fūzoku* shops. Providing a good business opportunity for *jōsei-muke fūzoku* shops. Male therapists could approach to potential female clientele in face to face, as women normally have to choose a male therapist from pixilated pictures with brief introductory scripts on each shop's websites. The event therefore was designed for two different purposes: meeting with one's favorite *eromen* and *lovemen* and male therapists and searching for a potential favorite among many male therapists who potentially would provide *jōsei-muke* AVs like fantasy.

Companied by Yoshiko and Yuri a friend of Yoshiko, I visited to SOD's office for *Ikemen Fes*. On arrival, checking the event's schedule, Yuri's main purpose was to take instax photos with her favorites, Uehara and Mukai. "I'm going to take five instax photos today!", said Yuri cheerfully. Yoshiko on the other hand, told us "I'm curious of different *jōsei-muke fūzoku* shops apart from SPA". Yoshiko would often visit SPA once in a month as she "supported" her *oshi*,

¹⁰⁰ WILD ONE is a sex toy shop which also manages a bar which displays more than 300 vibrators, dildos, and other sex toys.

¹⁰¹ Japanese style bondage which involves tying a person with several ropes.

¹⁰² Known as 'SM idol group' which promotes BDSM (Bondage, Domination, and Sado-Masochism) in a series of live performance.

or a favorite there. At the same time, Yoshiko told me that she would like to explore more intimate sexual service as SPA did not provide sexual service with mucosa contacts such as cunnilingus for health reason¹⁰³. We three then headed to the third floor with the main stage in order to buy tickets for instax photos. At the stall, tickets for front seats at the *eromen* and *lovemen* talk event were also sold as well as that of instax photos. “Oh no, we can’t get close enough without the ticket, how do you think?”, Yuri sighed. Yoshiko shook her head to the side and said, “I’d rather buy instax photos instead”. The ticket for an instax photo was 2000 JPY¹⁰⁴ per shot. Yuri had five and Yoshiko was three. As two pushed me to get one, I bought an instax photo ticket with Aleku, who was one of *lovemen* and worked for *jōsei-muke fūzoku* shop. In such a big event, I found that it was common to purchase multiple instax photos by seeing other female fans around myself. Yoshiko and Yuri once showed me a photobook which was full of instax photos with *eromen* and *lovemen*. For them it is not just an instax photo, rather it conveys time and an amount of money that she has spent on *eromen* and *lovemen*. Collecting these photos is a visualised material triumph for female fans.

Seeing Yoshiko and Yuri getting excited for instax photos as always as they did at other fan events, I had to stop and wonder what the purpose of this extensive event was (although the marketing model of collaboration among *jōsei-muke* sex industry was obvious) and moreover; how female fans received this message that was set up by SOD in association with *jōsei-muke fūzoku* shops. Echoing the current sex positive feminism, the program at the main stage included a seminar which invited a gynecologist to discuss women’s sexual health issues. This is, again, a “framing”; that is to add surplus values such as health care and relaxation on the matter of women’s sexual desire or pleasure in order to eliminate obscene and vulgar impressions of sexual talks. Despite staffs of SOD at entrance and tickets counter being welcoming, I sensed various intensions at the event: female fans such as Yoshiko and Yuri, those who wanted to interact with *eromen* and *lovemen* for their self-interests, male therapists from *jōsei-muke fūzoku* shops looking for potential clients, those who engaged with the promotions of sex positive attitudes from business perspectives, and female attendances who wanted to explore *jōsei-muke* sex industry. I will thus followingly examine this traffic of different intentions of attendances of the event.

¹⁰³ Commonly, the service of *jōsei-muke fūzoku* includes oil massage, kiss, and erotic massage with fingering and cunnilingus. SPA specializes erotic massage without mucosa contacts, which is Asuka the owner’s principle concerning sexual health for male therapists and female clients.

¹⁰⁴ 12.5 GBP (1GBP=160JPY).

Irokoi Eigyō: Performative Seduction

At the back of the main stage, there were male therapists from one of *jōsei-muke fūzoku* shops standing in front of the dark room. The room was assumingly used for massage trial. They were just standing and looking at female fans, which seemed odd and a little bit overwhelming to me. Yoshiko then whispered me, “These male therapists seem a bit different from that of SPA. They look more...wild so to speak”. While me nodding to that comment, I saw Toshio passing by. Telling Yuri and Yoshiko that I would go and check the second floor, I left the third floor and took stairs. On the second floor, I immediately noticed the stall of SPA group as it was nearby the entrance. Asuka looked at me and said “it’s so good to see you” and offered me a hand massage for 500 JPY¹⁰⁵. During hand massage, Asuka whispered me she joined the event for the purpose of market research. Toshio then came back and joined our conversation. “I just came back from checking other *jōsei-muke fūzoku* shops and they seemed too much vigorous...why don’t you go and try their massage? It might be good for your research”, he said to me with cheeky smile on his face. Asuka looked at me with vexed eyes and whispered, “I think many male therapists above (*jōsei-muke fūzoku* shops) do *irokoi eigyō*, which I don’t think is good for women in a long run...”.

Irokoi eigyō, is a coinage of *irokoi* (love or romance) and *eigyō* (business). It is commonly known as a marketing technique of host/hostess, which is “sensuous love trade”, a commodified romantic relationship” (Takeyama 2016:87). Host/hostess intentionally seduce their clients and ask for constant consumption as an exchange of their intimacy. This *irokoi eigyō* is an example of “emotional labour” (Hochschild 1983), which requires performative sentiment to make clients emotionally satisfied. A sociologist, Arlie Russell Hochschild (1983) has pointed out that people who engage in emotional labour face a challenge to one’s sense of self. This occurs in a situation such “the worker wonders whether her smile and the emotional labour that keeps it sincere are really hers” (1983:92). As a solution, therefore, the worker has to alienate one’s true self from the job and “take it lightly, unseriously” (Hochschild 1983:93). Referring to Hochschild’s emotional labour, Akiko Takeyama (2016), in her analysis of host clubs, has argued “seduction (in host clubs) involves not only evoking and manipulating the others’ feelings to produce satisfaction but also potentially enticing the seduces to serve the ends of the seducers themselves” (2016:74). Takeyama has seen a hetero-gendered difference in emotional labor; that is, male hosts use his masculinity under the name of professionalism and downplay femininised emotional labour to achieve future-oriented goal such as becoming

¹⁰⁵ 3.125 GBP (1GBP=160JPY).

a millionaire in the neo-liberal competition of host clubs. Hostess club, on the other hand, is a realm for men to boost their masculinity accompanied by hostess's performance as submissive women (Alison 1994). *Irokoi eigyō* thus should be understood as one of main technique in the commodified intimacy. And this is not exceptional for male therapists. This was the reason when Asuka had shown discontented look as she thought *irokoi eigyō* is an exploitation of female clients. My instant question here was that how *irokoi eigyō* functioned in *fūzoku* shops. Services in host/hostess clubs and *fūzoku* shops are different; the former is a bar with highly gendered performance, while the latter is straightforwardly sexual play. Please Note that host/hostess sometimes do *makura eigyō*, which is “‘pillow business’, sleeping with clients for money” (Takeyama 2016:87).

Shingo Sakatsume (2017) believes that the main reason for people (both men and women) constantly visit *fūzoku* shops is to address sexual loneliness. That is not only about the lack of physicality of sex but also “relationships”. A Similar point has been made by Gabriele Koch's research on female sex workers in Japan (2020), as in the way that female sex workers provide *iyashi* (“healing”) to male white colloers in order for them to restore productivity. Sakatsume points out, however, *fūzoku* shops only provide an instant sexual relationship, although some people go there are craving for a longitudinal relationship with a specific counterpart. By pointing out this dilemma between therapists (or escorts) and clients, Sakatsume argues that the value of *fūzoku* shops is to help their clients to practice sexual communication skills. From Sakatsume's point, it would be arguable that *irokoi eigyō* is also existent in *fūzoku* industry. The significance of *irokoi eigyō* is pseudo-relationship that is external to bar or hotel in which highly gendered service is performed and makes clients believe that is “real” romantic relationship despite of the economic and emotional exploitation. Asuka, echoing with Sakatsume, clarifies that her mission is to assist her female clientele to have self-esteem and to achieve comfortable romantic relationship in their “real” lives. “Real” here I use particularly signifies a social relationship which has no premise of commercial transaction and is sustained through commitments of individuals who take part in the relationship. From the perspective of the service provider, however, it is no wonder for them looking for a “good client” who would often visit and purchase the service constantly. *Irokoi eigyō*, sensuous love trade or so to say, performative seduction, is therefore rational strategy in this sense. On the other hand, for some female clients especially those who have a desire for relationship would possibly fall into this pitfall unless they are highly aware of the boundary between pure relationship in “real life” and the commodified intimacy. This is where the articulation of two actors, the service provider of

male therapists and female clientele contradicts with each other. The small entity of *Ikemen* festival innates different speculations within.

While chatting with Asuka, we were joined by three women, Mika, Rina, and Kaori whom I had known through the events of SPA. Those three were clientele of SPA and became friends with each other through SPA's events. Asuka constantly organises fan meeting events in order to showcase male therapists for new comers and also create community with female clientele. This is, as I confirmed with Asuka, is preventing the relationship between male therapists and female clients expanding to "private" realm, or *irokoi eigō*. Such a physical space of event visualises a clear boundary between male therapists and female clientele and also creates safe milieu and emotional bounding for female clientele as in the same way as SOD does. In their early 20s, Mika, Rina and Kaori shared similar profile; graduating from university or college in their hometown and coming to Tokyo for work. Mika was a nurse in hospital, Rina worked as a salesclerk in a clothe shop, and Kaori dealt with accounting in a medical company. When these three saw me and Asuka, they looked delighted and came to us. Mika said, "It's so good to see you two, we came here to support SPA's male therapists at the best male therapist competition!". Mika, Rina, Kaori, their prime purpose was not necessarily to meet up with specific *eromen* and *lovmen*; rather, they came here for SPA as was a part of it.

I remembered once Asuka told me these three had a problem in common: anxiety for a heterosexual romantic relationship and that was the reason for each of them to knock the door of SPA in the beginning. Mika could not stop having affairs with married men, as in Asuka's analysis, she had a lower self-esteem and only considered herself as a second-lover. Rina, as a bisexual woman, only had been engaging with women and was not sure how to deal with men. And Kaori, as a shy woman, had no idea of interacting with men at the same time felt ashamed of her virginity. With Asuka's consultation, SPA provided these three with training opportunities to familiarise themselves with intimate situation with men, echoing Sakatsume's suggestion. Asking them how they had found the event, Rina told me "we went to see the talk show with a gynaecologist on the third floor. It was a bit basic. We already know about female body as the discussion of sexual health has been viral on Twitter". Hearing that, I immediately reminded of how enthusiastic Rina was on Twitter, retweeting several tweets regarding sex positive feminism. While me nodding, "We are going to have some tea near the station and come back before the competition", said Kaori and three left the floor. I sensed their indifference to *eromen* and *lovemen* and many other male therapists there. This is probably because Mika, Rina, and Kaori value their friendship as community of SPA over interaction with *eromen* and *lovemen* and male therapists. I remember once Mika has told me while

chatting over coffee on one occasion, “Among many *jōsei-muke fūzoku* shops, I really owe and like SPA and Asuka. I talk about my personal issues with Asuka and male therapists. They help me to regain self-esteem for not only as a woman but a human being”. In contrast with recognition of femininity among host clubs’ clientele (Takayama 2016), Mika’s statement demonstrates the recognition as a human being. That reminds of Marilyn Strathern’s *The Gender of the Gift* (1988) in which Strathern has argued that gender is based on reciprocal conceptualisation of duality: “The singular person, then, regarded as a derivative of multiple identities, may be transformed into the dividual composed of distinct male and female elements” (Strathern 1988:). This is, person’s ontological and epistemological existence is prior to gender although gender is a principle form of social construction which influences one’s body holistically. Returning to the point of recognition (see Chapter 5), I would argue that recognition of femininity only serves fulfilment to a part of individuals’ multiple identity. As recognition directs to self-realisation, it is better not to be provided for one’s specific social attribute such as gender. In other words, pure relationship in Giddens that is: “refers to a situation where a social relation is entered into for its own sake, for what can be derived by each person from a sustained association with another; and which is continued only in so far as it thought by both parties to deliver enough satisfactions for individual to stay within it” (1993:58). Pure relationship, as Giddens has admitted, is ideal and contains risk of great hurt if it breaks. However, it could be a resource of recognition and self-esteem. In this context, I would see Asuka plays an important role for giving recognition to her clients without heteronormative power dynamics.

Several months after the event, Asuka told me that Mika, Rina, and Kaori had “graduated” from *jōsei-muke fūzoku*, finding other place or individual to commit. Mika is now actively on dating apps to find the significant other, Rina has started to work as “slave” in SM club¹⁰⁶, while Kaori is now in romantic relationship with her colleague. The idea of “graduation” here signifies the resolution of their problems and returning to the real life (see Chapter 5). Nonetheless, it has to be remarked that the idea of “graduation” only exists in SPA as Asuka, as an owner, has a very unique business idea compared to other *jōsei-muke fūzoku* shops. From the perspective of business, Asuka’s concept seems contradictory as she monetises sexual services but at the same time encourage her clientele for “graduation”. Asuka might be too idealistic despite of my own compassion to her concept. The emphasis therefore goes to those who cannot “graduate” from the fantasy which *jōsei-muke* sex industry provides here.

¹⁰⁶ “Slave”, according to Rina is a masochistic role in SM plays

The lack of Articulation

After seeing off Mika, Rina, and Kaori, I went to look for Yoshiko and Yuri. Yoshiko came down the stairs alone, looking for me and checking the second floor. We then decided to walk around stalls before the main event. On the second floor, we found stalls of *jōsei-muke* sex toy shops, LOVELYPOP and WILD ONE. The two stalls were next to each other, and I walked to the stall of LOVELYPOP. The women at the stall instantly recognised me as I had attended the other event by SOD and LOVELYPOP. “So very nice to see you again, I myself am having fun today by seeing many shops attending!”, said Tanaka cheerfully, a staff at LOVELYPOP. As I asked her how she had found the event, Tanaka told me; “I think it’s very important for women to enjoy their own sexuality as we are doing now here and this is how we should be from now on!”, with a huge smile on her face. While chatting with Tanaka, I saw Yoshiko was staring at sex toys displayed.

As noticing Yoshiko’s attention, a female staff next to Tanaka spoke to Yoshiko and explained their products. Tanaka and I then joined to listen her explanation. The recent trend of sex toys for women was styled as “not obvious as a sex toy”; the design of each product is not shaped as penis but simple and functional so that it could be displayed as decoration in the bedroom. Simultaneously, there were variations for different pleasure such as targeting G-spot or clitoris. Yoshiko suddenly turned at me and whispered to my ear, “I don’t feel comfortable using toys...Have you ever used these by yourself?”. The whole atmosphere between us rapidly turned awkward. Although Yoshiko “whispered” to me, it was clear that her comment was loud enough to be heard by Tanaka and the staff. I thus tried to patch thing up and voiced my opinion regarding self-pleasure; “Yes, I have. I have one myself and use it regularly. It makes me sleep better”. Yoshiko still gave me sceptical eyes and continued, “but if you do too much alone, you cannot come with a man”. The staff then jumped our “whispering” and said, “it’s totally different!” with a smile but persuasive one. Not sure if Yoshiko was convinced; however, what happened at the moment bothered me for a while.

The moment clearly has demonstrated a conflict between Yoshiko’s prejudice and the promotion of *jōsei-muke* sex toy shops. It is unknown how Yoshiko has formed her view on sex toys; however, it has given me a sense of difficulty which sex positive feminism might have. Despite of the encouragement which the event itself conveys, female participants join the event only to fulfil their own interests. Following Linda Alcoff’s (1991) problematisation of speaking for others, speaker’s (in this context, sex positive feminism) positionality has to be considered carefully. Alcoff has argued that “the practice of speaking for other is often born of

a desire for mastery, to privilege oneself as the one who more correctly understands the truth about another's situation or as one who can champion a just cause and thus achieve glory and praise" (1991:29). This is not to deny the enthusiasm of those who are vocal of sex positive feminism such as Tanaka and those who engage in it; however, their words might not be the truth for other women, for instance someone like Yoshiko. I would argue that it is a result of a gap between formalistic approach to female emancipation. The reversal of the "male gaze" or "male desire" as female emancipation based solely on the content of the pornographic products is misleading and ignores pre-existing gender issues. Although it is essential as an initial step to make a change in gendered system of adult industry. It is not certain whether those who engage in sex positive feminism is aware of this difficulty. And falling into such formalism is easy. I would like to argue; however, this is a part of the process of the whole challenge. Simultaneously, it takes a huge amount of time and effort to deconstruct internalised views of female sexual subjectivity. Sex positive feminism whether it is still a formalism or not itself has a value but has not yet arrived at the common understanding among women. The conflict between Yoshiko and Tanaka results from two different positionalities and understandings of female sexual subjectivity. Nonetheless, it has to be emphasised that there is no reason to criticise the Yoshiko's indifference to female sexual emancipation; rather her own interests in of *jōsei-muke* realm gives me a unique direction to understand female fans visiting the event.

Fans' Consumption of *Jōsei-muke* Realm

After a while, Yoshiko and I went up to the third floor for the main event: the best male therapist competition. In contrast to the second floor, the event space was full of people. We saw Yuri, Mika, Rina, and Kaori there. Seeing Mika waving a hand at us, Yoshiko and I joined them and sat down at empty seats. The main event then started. First, six candidates introduced themselves in a row, following the ranking of popularity which determined by online poll in advance.

The top runner was Nao from SPA, performing a song with a guitar. Then we had Makoto from who was a former AV actor showing stand-up comedy. It was followed by Hiro singing, Taichi demonstrating *kinbaku*, Sasuke from showing mimicry, and Yūtarō demonstrating a speech in French. Yoshiko on my right then asked me who my favourite was. I answered it was Yūtarō because of his well-muscled body and tanned skin. "Mmm, a beach boy type, not bad. I like Taichi, he looks like a cute puppy. But those ones who looks like hosts are not for me." Although she did not clarify but I knew it was Hiro and Sasuke as both had well-maintained

looks¹⁰⁷. Hearing Yoshiko's comment, Yuri on my left responded, "I like host lookalikes. I think they are beautiful. In the end they are selling dreams. So why should I want something ordinary?". Yuri, who worked as a female escort herself, was highly aware of the fantasy of night life. It was thus understandable that her comments coming from the place where the high beauty standard was required for both male and female workers. Nonetheless, the contrast of Yoshiko and Yuri's comments highlighted that fact that their gaze for male therapists was aiming to search their own favourites in the same way for *eromen* and *lovemen*.

The event was then followed by each male therapists' strip show, taking off their cloths one by one (not full naked, but only underwear) and compete who was the hottest. Surrounded by women looking at male naked bodies with speculative gaze and whispering to each other, I had to ask myself if the situation was corresponding with Linda Williams' advocacy (1989) for the importance of female gaze in pornography. As Williams stated that the origin of pornography is a male speculation of female body as "a journey to the unseen world of the sexual other and return to tell the story" (1989:279). Seeing female audience there, I confirmed that it is possible to make the journey of a heterosexual female perspective which constructs "the unknowable mystery of masculine desire and pleasure" (ibid). The point which Williams has made, however, conditions active participation of women to construct "speculative" gaze for male body. This is again, falling into formalism of switching subject from men to women. The situation here is that although it has appeared that women objectifying male bodies, their fantasy have been them receiving sexual pleasure from those male therapists. The idea of man's salvation of women's sexual pleasure (Wong and Yau 2019. see details in Chapter 4) is still relevant here.

Voting time came, we were asked to put a ball which was prepared for each seat in advance in designed boxes for each male therapist. I put mine in Nao's, just to show my compassion to Asuka. So as Mika, Rina, and Kaori, which is predictable as they were also fans of SPA. I saw Yoshiko also put hers in Nao and Yuri's in Hiro. As each box handed over to contestants, the counting balls began. At the same time the host of the contest, Nagase a *lovemen* counted numbers, each contestant took a ball one by one. The last two was Taichi and Nao. And Nao won the competition by a hair, which was celebrated cheerfully by the audience. Mika, Rina, and Kaori sitting in front of me in row looked behind at me and gave me huge smiles. The triumph of Nao, although this never goes beyond my assumption, is resulted from his

¹⁰⁷ The archetype of host is styled hair and make-ups, which demonstrates their high awareness of their appearance as a commodity.

androgynous and gentle looks, which gives an impression of non-aggressive, non-macho man. This assumption comes from the fact that the least popular therapist has been Makoto, who is a former AV actor in his mid-40s. Embodying an essence of *danyū* (see Chapter 4), Makoto represents highly sexual man, which might be “too much” for female audience there. Recalling Yoshiko’s comment during Makoto’s performance, she whispered; “He seems a bit...you know, different. I don’t know why he has been chosen for a competitor”. Then Yuri replied “But he is well-known for his techniques, as is rumoured to have slept with hundreds of women”. I witnessed Yoshiko’s unsatisfied face, as a reaction to Yuri’s comment. Echoing with the fact that *eromen* and *lovemen* also have androgynous gentle looks as in the same way with Nao, it is fairly arguable that female fans here look for someone who is not overly macho and sexual provocative. Even though services at *jōsei-muke fūzoku* are highly sexual, sexual techniques and physical masculinity which symbolise a huge penis were not desired by many female audiences here. Returning to the point of “relaxation”, those overly masculine men evoke sexual pleasure, perhaps too straightforwardly. Androgynous, or boys band lookalikes, on the other hand, convey prince charming like fantasy which provide women with not only sexual pleasure but more importantly emotional satisfaction. I believe this also results from women’s hesitation to focusing on sexual pleasure and desire for emotional comfort, making connection between sex and relaxation.

As the main event ended with a sense of linger, the following time was for female audience to interact with male therapists. As Yoshiko and Yuri left soon after the contest, I was with Mika, Rina, and Kaori and joined to Asuka and therapists at SPA, celebrating for Nao’s triumph. While hanging around with them, I saw many women interacting with male therapists on the floor. I instantly assumed each shop has their own clientele here. As I was standing and taking notes alone, a male therapist approached me and said, “You look pretty, I just want to say hi to you. Here’s my business card so please call me anytime if you want some fun”. He handed me his business card and left me with a wink. Although I instantly felt overwhelmed and flirted by his confidence, it seemed a bit ridiculous by seeing him speaking to other women in the same way as he just did to me. It was somehow understandable that this was the perfect situation for male therapists to find new customers. Mika then came to my side and look into the business card which I had just received. “Ahh, he is trying hard. Look, I also got one. He is so dumb and too straightforward and doesn’t understand what women want”, Mika said critically. “So, what do you think women want?”, I asked. She continued, “I think we all want to be led gently through a good communication skill. Asking women ‘do you want have a fun with me’? It’s nonsense!”. Nodding to her opinion, I was wondering if it was too heteronormative. Recalling

from what has been observed through the event, I argue that “enjoying female sexuality” in this unique situation is underlying women’s passive-active desire for male presence. It is thus questionable whether the sex positive feminists’ discourse of women’s subjective sexual desire as discussed above is alive or not.

Conclusion

This chapter has illustrated female fans’ consumption of *jōsei-muke* adult industry with a particular focus on its relation to the increasing sex positive feminism. In conjunction with the emergence of *jōsei-muke* AVs, female consumption of male escorts (namely, therapists) has been increasing in the past five years. The main characteristic of *jōsei-muke fūzoku* (brothels for women) is an emphasis on female sexual pleasure in relation to women’s relaxation. Such an approach to female sexual pleasure, I argued is resulting from the confrontation with the pre-existing bipolarised heteronormative understandings: women are considered sexually passive and not supposed to disclose their sexual desire openly, while it is not any case for men. Despite *twit-femi*, online based feminism and its influence has been increasing in Japanese society, it is still a target of controversy (Sakatsume 2020) and faces with many challenges. As seen in the example of female self-pleasure. I would thus consider that women’s relaxation is a tactic of feminists’ movement to gain acknowledgement of female sexual subjectivity.

While the current attempt of sex positive feminism is gradually acknowledged among Japanese women, it is questionable if it is shared with female consumers of *jōsei-muke* industry. With the in-depth ethnographic analysis of SOD’s *Ikemen* Festival, I have demonstrated dilemmas and conflicts between various participants of the event in regards to their attitudes towards female sexual pleasure. With a slogan of “women enjoying sex”, the aim of the event is to showcase different *jōsei-muke* adult industry from AVs, self-pleasure, and *fūzoku* shops highlighting male therapists. Despite of that, regular female fans such as Yoshiko and Yuri, it is just another opportunity to interact with *eromen* and *lovmen*, purchasing several tickets for instax photos. The unique actor here, male therapists at the event floor were looking for new customers vigorously. Their marketing method, *irokoi eigyō* is a strategy which is to seduce female clients emotionally not only during the service but also extensive to private realm, for instance to direct messages and private dates. So that female clients invest their time and money on male therapists with a little hope to become their significant one (which rarely happens). As Asuka’s critique of *irokoi eigyō*, it is a well-thought business model but highly exploitive. The contradiction underlies that those who trapped in *irokoi eigyō* are looking for pure relationships

in Giddens' definition; however, the value of *fūzoku* is to provide sexual pleasure as a paid service. If the recognition is only achievable by purchase, it does create the viscous circle of commodified intimacy. Simultaneously, taking Strathern's idea (1988) of gender as a secondary identity, I would argue that recognition which is to be achieved via the commodification of intimacy only serves fulfilment to a part of individuals' multiple identity. Encouraging female sexual subjectivity but also the long-term consumption is the dilemma which the event internalises within. The substantial problem here is that the idea of "women enjoying sex" is falling into formalism as also seen from the example of Yoshiko's reaction to self-pleasure. In a sense that reversing pre-existing subjects from men to women, as in constructing what used to be predominantly men for women that can be seen in *jōsei-muke fūzoku* and promoting masturbation for women (although they change the term to "self-pleasure"). Agreeing with the importance of such acknowledgement of female sexual pleasure, I argue that it has to be followed by consideration of pre-existing gender issues to fill in the gap between forms and understandings of women.

Ethnographic description of the main event was then followed by the contest of best male therapists, which highlighted the current climate of fans' consumption of *jōsei-muke* realm. At a first glance, it appears that women objectifying men, echoing with William's advocacy (1989) of the significance of female gaze; however, their desire is to be objectified by good looking and androgynous men who appear to be gentle and approachable in contrast to those who evoke masculinity in overly sexual manner. The passive-active sexual desire of female audiences is significant here. Yet it is arguable that "women enjoying sex" in this unique context is the phenomenon which female fans actively express their own sexual desire to be feel wanted and flattered by men. This does explain the popularity of the contents which involves the presence of male figures such as instax photos with *eromen* and *lovemen* and interactions with male therapists from *jōsei-muke fūzoku* shops and also, female fans' indifference to self-pleasure products. The current sex positive feminism therefore is arguably still on the hands of those who actively engage with the movement. This is not to humiliate the movement itself; however, it has been demonstrated that different participants at the event have intentions or purpose according to their own self-interests. In the following chapter, I will analyse in more details how my informants "act out" their desire with a couple of case study in relation to the idea of passive-active sexual desire which has been discussed here.

Chapter 7 The Moral Career of Fans, Acting Out of “Desire”

Introduction

“Because I really like him...”, says Yoshiko while chucking skins of edamame at Izakaya, Japanese style pub. The occasion was our informal interview after one of *eromen* events. This comment comes out of Yoshiko’s mouth when she describing her feeling towards Eiji, a male therapist. Not just as a researcher but as a friendly human being, I have to stop asking too many questions when facing such a personal and emotional comments. Although her relationship with Eiji was that of a client and a therapist, Yoshiko developed romantic feelings towards him and dropped her marriage hunting so that she can focus on a relationship with him. My instant reaction was “How could she shift her focus all of a sudden? And how could she believe that her relationship with a male escort is a ‘authentic’ one?”

To answer this question, this chapter will look deep into “moral career” of three interlocutors. Driven from Erving Goffman’s examination of mental patient, “[t]he moral career of a person of a given social category involves a standard sequence of changes in his way of conceiving of selves, including, importantly, his own. These half-buried lines of development can be followed by studying his moral experiences - that is, happenings which mark a turning point in the way in which the person views the world -- although the particularities of this view may be difficult to establish” (1961:168). Goffman also pointed out the similarity of such an approach to mental patients and anthropological study of a foreign culture. Until the last chapter, the focus has been on female fans’ identity and consumption of *jōsei-muke* adult industry. I have argued that female fans are not necessarily sexually active; rather they are often reserved about sexual matters. For them, the fandom which SOD has created for the purpose of the promotion of *eromen* and *lovemen* functions as a sanctuary in which female fans feel at ease with opening up about their sexuality.

The focus of this chapter is to understand how they “act-out” their sexual desire and how their view of the world and themselves have changed in the nexus of confined fan community. It is built from in-depth conversations with my main interlocutors, Yuri, Yoshiko and Arisa whom I have met at *eromen* and *lovemen* events. They are all engaged in the consumption of *jōsei-muke fūzoku* (see Chapter 6). If we consider *eromen* and *lovemen* to provide a set of heteronormative fantasies, I argue that *jōsei-muke fūzoku* provides its practice¹⁰⁸. It has then

¹⁰⁸ It also has to be noted that some *lovemen* work as male escorts, too.

become apparent that *irokoi eigyō* (see Chapter 6) and/or commodified recognition played an important part in forming my interlocutors' projective identification; that is "institutional reflexivity (...). [p]rojection here creates a feeling of wholeness with the other" (Giddens 1993:61).

This chapter will demonstrate that how they are infused with each other, by the three interlocutors, Yuri, Yoshiko and Arisa's moral career. For Yuri, a female escort in the early 20s, it is a personal and professional relationship with her significant other in the same business. Yoshiko seeks to attain her version of passionate love with a male escort who would give her extended attention via texts from "good morning" to "good night". A university student, Arisa, on the other hand, obtains her confidence as a woman by performing an overly sexual persona in the sex industry. By (re)defining the term ritual as a "mode of framing activities" (Seligman et al 2008) that is embodied by sincerity of the participant who plays a part of it, I argue that sincerity, a significant point of ritual, is a performative mode of production of self-coherence. It is also a product of ongoing sincere performances, which I argue, creates "desire to believe"; a state of mind that eliminates any possibility of falseness. People including my interlocutors therefore spin their moments together in order to create a coherent sense of self.

Another point of moral career which Goffman has pointed out that it concerns "the protection required by the person for the version of himself which he presents to others, and the way in which the withdrawal of this protection can form a systematic, if unintended, aspect of the working of an establishment" (1961:169). In this in-depth ethnographic description, my instant reaction to their comments and attitudes, as in the same way as my instant reaction to Yoshiko's comment above, are included to indicate my own positionality as a researcher who is outside of the establishment of the fan community. As well as a Japanese woman in the late 20s who is also constantly questioning the "authentic" feeling in the name of romantic relationships. This is to show the dynamic interaction in such a series of exceedingly personal depictions, and to pay respect to my interlocutors who have kindly participated in my research. Needless to say, some personal information which are not relevant to the main argument are changed for the protection of the interlocutors.

The Vicious Circle of Performance and Consumption

Yuri is a female escort, working at an image club (*imekura*, a coined word of image and club) in which female escorts wear various kinds of costumes according to male clients' requests. With deep black short bob hair, white silky skin and almond eyes, Yuri confidently embraces her femininity. "I often get requests from clients to perform a dominatrix, you know, with a

whip!” she said while slipping on a cocktail. Yuri and I were having some drinks at the izakaya, in the middle of Kabuki-chō. It was our first time to meet each other outside of SOD’s events. Perhaps due to the power of alcohol, Yuri was surprisingly frank and opened up her life story to me. After graduating from high school in North-eastern (Tōhoku) Japan, Yuri came to Tokyo to study cosmetic massage. Trying to make ends meet every month in a big city like Tokyo while studying, Yuri started to work as a female escort. “For me, the idea of the sex industry is fundamentally the same as the cosmetic industry: both are aiming to provide relaxation”, explained Yuri. By studying body relaxation at college, Yuri applied this technique and that became her expertise and helped her gain popularity from male clients. I asked how much money she made regularly: “At highest, I have earned 800,000 JPY¹⁰⁹ in a month. If you earn that amount of money at once, it would seem ridiculous to work in a normal salon”, said Yuri. It is surprising for me that she makes such huge profits, especially when compared with Nakamura’s analysis (2014) of the current crisis in the sex industry.

According to Atsuhiko Nakamura (2014), the stereotypical mass media image of female sex worker making huge profits has changed since the saturation of human resources in the industry. For those who have troubles with making ends meet every month, the sex industry is a good option as it offers flexibility and instant cash income. Therefore, many female university students and housewives are working as female escorts. There are approximately 32,5000 to 390,000 women in the industry (Nakamura 2014:104)¹¹⁰. The inevitable outcome is the decrease of income and exacerbated competition. Nakamura also has pointed out that working in the sex industry these days requires a good appearance and unique sales’ point in order to differentiate oneself from other competitors. Although there are price gaps between urban and rural areas, the average monthly salary of a female sex worker is 300,000 JPY¹¹¹, which is not so different from the salary of an average office worker in Japan. Considering the current situation of the sex industry, we can assume that Yuri is a successful case and her confidence is resulting from her ability to survive by using her professional expertise of aesthetic massage.

Yuri continued with a laugh, “But I like using all the money that I have earned for my favorites, Uehara-kun and Akito (a male escort). By the end of month, nothing is left in my purse”. Looking at my surprised reaction, Yuri smiled with a sigh and explained her such consumption behaviour,

¹⁰⁹500 GBP (1GBP=160JPY)

¹¹⁰ This estimated number is calculated from total number of *fūzoku* shops (13,000) by staffs at each shop (25 to 30).

¹¹¹ 1875 GBP (ibid).

“My work is highly stressful and physically demanding, that is why I need to relax by spending money on my *oshi* (favourite men). We [herself, *eromen* and male escorts] work in a very similar environment, where we satisfy our clients’ emotional needs. It is an extreme form of service business, so we can share our stresses and concerns because we have a lot in common”.

Yuri’s emphasis on relaxation here is different from what I have already discussed in the previous chapter (see Chapter 6), that is, relaxation as a veil for women to enjoy sex. Rather, I argue that in this particular case, it is an emotional fulfilment –*iyashi* in the meaning of “healing” (Koch 2020) – which has been reduced or suppressed during her work as an escort. From the way she has spoken of her work as stressful, I sense that sex work is emotional labour. Of course, it is physically demanding but her stress is more to do with her emotions (if it is more to do with physicality, she could have gone to a physiotherapist). Elaborating on Arlie Hochschild’s concept of emotional labour (1983), a psychiatrist Asako Takei (2006) pointed out that those who heavily engage in emotional labour found more ease at work rather than focusing on complexity of emotions which often happened at home. In Takei’s analysis, for those who engage in emotional labour, in other words, those who are skilful at facilitating and performing then the authentic feeling will increasingly become difficult to feel because they split themselves off from emotional life. In other words, the performance starts to seep into one’s personal relationships as well. This condition is known as disassociation in psychiatry and results from a self-defence mechanism to avoid dismantle oneself from fear or hostility.

In the case of Yuri, “work” signifies certain performance in which high degrees of emotional labour is required. Her monthly income as an escort heavily relies on the popularity, which can be cultivated not only by her skilful massage technique but also a huge effort to make clients feel good, sometimes by caring for them outside of work hours (see *irokoi eigyō* in Chapter 6). Retaining Sakatsume’s argument (2017) that many clients of *fūzoku* shops seek for a social relationship, I can only imagine of hardness that female escorts such as Yuri herself has to respond to high expectation from clients. Listening to Yuri’s emphasis on her need to treat herself, her constant and vast investment in *eromen* and *lovemen* and male therapists perhaps is the only way to release her stress. This is also supported by Yuri’s statement; “I don’t like average salarymen and prefer to be with men who work in similar industry with me”. Not to examine Yuri’s mental condition; rather to provide possibility on a basis of series of her comments, I would argue that *irokoi eigyō* with those “professional” men well-serves Yuri’s

desire, eliminating a complexity of social relationship. Although it appears that Yuri has a strong persona that can survive emotional ebbs and flows in connection with emotional labour as she is a part of *irokoi eigyō*.

She then told me about her “personal” relationship with a male therapist, Yuri said full of confidence, “I am in a partnership with this man, he is the number one male therapist at the shop” while showing me a picture of him on her smartphone. I then asked what the partnership meant for her. Yuri explained, “You know, he and I are in the same industry, so we are trying to set up a new business. We are holding together as a couple and also business partners”. According to Yuri, she and Mitsu, a popular male therapist, had been in romantic relationship although I had to wonder why she had to pay in order to meet her lover (which, she explained, was a form of support). By using Mitsu’s popularity and Yuri’s massage technique, they were trying to be independent from their current shops and create the new one. It was obvious that Yuri felt a certain privilege over Mitsu’s clients (which was no wonder as Yuri was his girlfriend): “I know how popular Mitsu is and don’t care how many women he sleeps with per night. He always makes time to meet me and we do have actual sex even though he is on duty”, said Yuri. The emphasis on penile-vaginal penetration (*honban-koui*, see Chapter 3) here, in my understanding, is a signifier that their relationship is not a business-like; rather it is more intimate one. She also told me with a smile, “when I went to the fortune-teller, she said that I was going to marry sometime soon. I think it’s definitely about me and Mitsu. You can write about us in your paper”. Yuri’s sweet and charming face when talking about the marriage is unforgettable. This is when I realised her desire for a personal, and heteronormative romantic relationship, despite her claim that her investment in her *oshi*, *eromen* (and *lovemen*) and male therapist is purely self-serving. Our night ended when Yuri told me that she had to go to meet one of her *oshi*.

A couple months after our first meeting, I met Yuri again after a SOD’s event. We decided to have a chat over coffee in Nakano, near Shinjuku. Yuri looked a bit depressed, which was very unlike her according to my first impression. I asked what had happened to her: “Mitsu is ignoring my messages these days. He doesn’t respond my texts or calls.” She showed me a talk room of LINE with Mitsu. The talk room was full of messages and missed calls from Yuri with few of Mitsu’s responses saying “I’m busy” or “Later”. I immediately got worried because the situation was so different from what Yuri had described a couple month ago. Looking at Yuri’s sad face, I asked if she had an idea of what had happened between them. Yuri replied, “No idea, he just cut me out all of a sudden. It’s so sad and frustrating”. Hearing her story, Yuri already knew that Mitsu was getting ready for opening up his own *jōsei-muke fūzoku* shop by himself.

“It’s just a rumour in the industry. But we were supposed to do it together”, said Yuri with tears in her eyes. While trying to show compassion as much as possible, I remained speechless and no words came out to make her better. Considering Mitsu’s possible intentions over and over, I could not help recalling the idea of *irokoi eigyō* that indicates their romantic relationship might be “commodified” one. Knowing Yuri’s perception of their partnership as a purely romantic one, I could never say such a thing. Although “ghosting”, that is suddenly ending all communication and relationship with another person could of course happens in modern dating practice.

However, there is a structural issue here. Yuri has been financially supporting Mitsu through her constant visits to the shop, while Mitsu never visits Yuri’s shop (this is a fact I only have found out in our second meeting). Clearly Mitsu did not share Yuri’s perception that they were in a romantic relationship which leads to marriage. Perhaps, it might be nonsense to become naïve in the highly neoliberal realm of performative emotional labour as Akiko Takeyama (2010) has argued in her analysis of hosts’ enthusiasm to do whatever it takes to get to the top. What strikes here is, *irokoi eigyō* embraces and reflects heteronormative discourse, although it is potentially exploitive. Even though Yuri is experienced in a world based on the exchange of emotional labour, it is also understandable for her as a woman in her early 20s to desire for a personal, and romantic connection. The underlying dilemma is that within this vicious circle of performing and consuming of emotional labour, it is extremely difficult to find out what is neutrally “pure” for each other referring to Giddens’s “pure relationship” (see Chapter 6). Simultaneously, it might be perhaps argued that Yuri’s involvement in emotional labour influences her perception of romantic relationship, ignoring red flags (one-sided financial supports) of her relationship with Mitsu. Wiping off tears in her eyes, Yuri presented me with a big news:

“I actually have decided to sign a contract with an agency of AV actors. You know, I have spent a lot of time and money on my oshi, although some for Mitsu was a bit of waste...so I need to change my life and hopefully can make love with my favourite *eromen* on screen someday!”

As Yuri seemed convinced and happy, I believed it was a positive change in her life. But at the same time, the way she told me convinced me that she really needed to earn a lot of money in

a short period of time¹¹². Wishing her a good career, I have to recall Atsuhiko Nakamura's (2012 see Chapter 3) analysis of the current AV industry as a shrinking one. Compared to its golden era of 1990s, the AV industry is facing difficulties due to the tsunami-like popularity of free online streaming porn sites. This directly influences the salary of each actor in the industry. Besides, those who can perform with *eromen* and *lovemen* are high-ranked actors. The road to fame therefore seems very steep.

A Flight from Social Pressure of Marriage-Hunting

In contrast to Yuri's more down-to-earth case, Yoshiko is an example of one who lives in *virtuality* (Bruce Kapferer 2004; see Chapter 5), the physical and emotional space of the fan community as ritual space due to its unique setting and difference from the "real" social realm. Yoshiko, in her late 30s, works as an office clerk in a small real estate company from Monday to Friday, 9 am to 5pm. I first knew her via a friend of mine in the early stages of my fieldwork and we immediately got close. Yoshiko then became my regular company to SOD's *eromen* and *lovemen* events.

After my second visit to SILK Festival in December 2018, I asked Yoshiko to interview her over coffee, which she approved very kindly. Sitting at café and having a cup of cappuccino, I asked her about her first encounter with *eromen*. "I never saw myself getting deeply involved with AV actors, you know, as I am coming from a generation which is still a bit reserved about sex in general. Of course, I have had lovers in the past but the AV itself was something I'd never explore by myself", said Yoshiko. It is understandable, considering her reaction to self-pleasure products (see Chapter 5); however, at the same time I found her enjoying to be able to talk openly about sex with me. Yoshiko is such a delightful person to talk with. She continued with a smile,

"My interests in sex has been kept to only myself. But when I watched a sample DVD of SILK LABO in *an•an*, I fell in love with Uehara-kun (an *eromen*). In the beginning, I didn't nothing but watching DVDs of Uehara-kun and gradually I wanted to interact with him. I thought it was crazy in the beginning. But then I learned it's ok, and the fandom connects me with others such as you".

¹¹² It is often said that female escorts could earn more if they appear AVs.

Similar to others such as Eriko (who appeared in Chapter 5), Yoshiko also has found *jōsei-muke* AVs via *an•an*, a popular women’s magazine. While convinced that *an•an* is often a doorway to the realm of *jōsei-muke* AVs for most fans, I have to wonder about Yoshiko’s constant comments of the dilemma which she has for being open about sex. This is perhaps a generational mind-set as Yoshiko has described, which reminds me of Fukase’s statement, a staff at SILK LABO, who has said that female fans in their 30s or 40s are not familiar with pornographic materials or any sex related subjects. Simultaneously, looking back to the history of AV industry, it has been predominantly designed for male users (see Chapter 3). In this sense, Yoshiko’s dilemma could be argued to be the result of sociocultural structure surrounding AV industry.

Our conversation then slid into Yoshiko’s recent visit to a *konkatsu* party. *Konkatsu* (neologism of *kon*: marriage and *katsu*: act, first created by sociologist Masahiro Yamada and journalist Tōko Shirakawa in 2008) is a term to describe marriage hunting. The activity varies from using online dating apps, asking for a friend to introduce single acquaintances, or visiting a series of parties which are set up by a company specialising matchings. The one that Yoshiko had been to was based on a membership system, in which she had to register beforehand to attend the matching party. “I didn’t know but the price for women is different according to our age!”, Yoshiko explained to me with a bit of frustration. According to Yoshiko, she had paid 6000 JPY¹¹³ while the registration fee was 3000 JPY¹¹⁴ for those female attendances in their 20s. For male attendances, it was 10,000 JPY¹¹⁵ regardless of their age. In the ruthless marriage market of *konkatsu*, those women under 30s often receive numerous offers from their counterparts because they are believed to have much possibility for childbirth. For men it is about financial capacity (e.g. annual salary or respectable occupations such as medical doctor or lawyer) to take care of a household. The *konkatsu* in Japan is based upon an extremely heteronormative idea of women staying home during men working hard, despite of the recent feminist trend that sees marriage is an individual choice.

Then I had to ask Yoshiko, “why are you trying to get married in such a rush?”. My phrasing was perhaps a bit offensive, which I immediately regretted the moment hearing Yoshiko’s sigh,

“You know, I am nearly 40 years old. I HAVE TO GET MARRIED as soon as possible. Otherwise, people around me would see me as if there was something wrong with

¹¹³ 37.5 GBP (1GBP = 160 JPY)

¹¹⁴ 18.75 GBP (ibid)

¹¹⁵ 62.5 GBP (ibid)

myself. It might not sound realistic for you in your 20s. But the pressure is real to me on a daily basis”,

said Yoshiko looking directly at my eyes. Regretting my inattentive comment, Yoshiko’s sincere attitude struck me to consider this heteronormative issue regarding marriage. Single women have been negatively described in Japanese mass media by terms such as “loser dogs” and “parasite single” (Nakano 2014), despite of the recent scholarly interests in singlehood in Japan (Dales 2014). The terms “loser dogs” (*make-inu*) contrasts to the idea of “winner” who marries with a significant partner and “parasite single” signifies those who remain single at their home with parents and are able to spend their expenses for their hobbies and interests. Those terms are created with an ideological premise that is a marriage is conditional as a marker of maturity (Tokuhiro 2010). The idea of marriage as a necessary passage to adulthood in Japan resonates not only with Yohiko but also with myself, despite the difference of the amount of pressure we both receive from people around.

Several attempts have been made to challenge this hegemonic discourse on marriage. Chizuko Ueno (2007) and Kumiko Iwashita (2001) have spoken of alternatives, which is women to live independently as *ohitori-sama* (*ohitori* for alone with *sama* as a polite description for the third/second person). The independence here for women means that to live freely outside of home/child care. Ueno (2007) spoke about *ohitori-sama* life exclusively for widows in old age (later Ueno published a book on male widowers in 2009), while Iwashita (2001) does for those women who can spend their expense for their own, such as traveling abroad alone, dining alone, and shopping alone regardless one’s marriage status quo. According to Iwashita, “a good mature woman” can enjoy their time independently from their (male) partners” (2001). The issue here however is that financial capacity is conditional for women to enjoy their *ohitori-sama* life, which makes the whole point questionable considering many women in *konkatsu* market are still looking for men with more than just a decent salary. Moreover, Japan’s aging society and low birth rates have become deeply troubling to the Japanese government. Many local governments support *konkatsu* parties in rural area, aiming for inviting women from urban area to match with single men (such as those who engage with agricultural/fishing industries) (Satōh 2019). According to Yamada and Shirakawa (2013) *konkatsu* theorists, the problem of low birth rates is the result from low marriage rate in Japan since the birth rates among married couples has been stable. That is therefore important to

encourage marriage on a national level¹¹⁶. Although I argue that marriage should not be forced but chosen as an individual choice, it is extremely difficult to demolish the idea of marriage as there is a cascade-like pressure from the previous generations as well as from the Japanese government. It is therefore no wonder that Yoshiko feels that marriage is of extreme importance in her life.

After a few second of awkward silence, I asked Yoshiko if she had found a good man at the *konkatsu* party. She told me: “No, not at all. Every man there looked like... a bit nerdy and reserved. But I ended up becoming friends with some other female attendances and we just focused on eating a nice buffet” with a huge laugh. “That’s very much you, Yoshiko. But what kinds of men are you particularly looking for?”, I asked while picturing Yoshiko in her best outfit and chatting lively with her associations near the buffet stand. Yoshiko looked disappointed and said, “I think what I am looking for in men is kindness. A man who knows how to treat women, like *eromen*. They recognise me and even remember a brief chat I have had with them. So, I am not asking for a good job with a huge income so it shouldn’t be that difficult. I just want to feel protected, cared, and loved”.

Believing that her desire itself is valuable on its own, I have to argue that such relationships are based on mutual commitment, support, and caring. Besides, what *eromen* do on the screen and to the fans is presumably for their own fame and reputation, simply as a part of their job. However, Yoshiko’s concept of romantic relationship has caught my attention. From what I have heard from Yoshiko, she believes or “desires to believe” that *eromen* really care for her sincerely. This is an example of the bounded authenticity of Bernstein (2007 see Chapter 5), that is, feeling of authenticity that emerges from sales and purchase of physical or emotional connections. On one hand, from Yoshiko’s perspective it is a sincere feeling of caring, but what about *eromen*’s side?

It is perhaps true that *eromen* consider her as one of their regular clients and as such takes care of her sincerely. Despite the fact that the relationship of Yoshiko and *eromen* is based on mutual sincerity, there is a gap between their intensions. Yoshiko desires to be cared for; that is getting the recognition of love. Love is the most fundamental form of recognition, as Axel Honneth has argued and that “fundamental level of emotional confidence - helps to bring about, constitutes the psychological precondition for the development of all further attitudes of self-

¹¹⁶ According to Satōh (2019), the second Abe government (2012-2014) emphasised on women’s higher employment policy as a labor force rather than accepting immigrants from overseas. Abe’s main policy of “*hataraki-kata kaikaku*” (work-style reform) thus is aiming for encouraging better work and life balance, which makes it easier for both men and women to work and contribute housework and childcaring.

respect” (1995:107). Hearing Yoshiko’s begging for protection from her potential significant other, I argue that her desire is for her to establish a better version of herself, emotionally and socially. The societal factor is resulting from my observation of Yohiko’s emphasis on pressure from people surrounding her. On the other hand, *eromen* want more societal recognition that is, fame and popularity, and they do perform according to fans’, including Yohiko’s expectations not to lose their clientele. Yoshiko and *eromen*’s needs therefore exist in parallel but they appear reciprocal.

This vague exchange of recognition somehow functions in the realm of SOD’s fantasy, in Kapferer’s words *virtuality* (2004). Unlike pure relationship (Giddens 1993) in which people find their significant other with a sense of unconditional commitment. It is also true that these kinds of romantic relationship based on unconditional commitment rarely exists, considering the current Japanese *konkatsu* market. Those women engaging in *konkatsu* typically look for men with a good salary, and men look for young and good-looking women. It might be almost possible to say that the current idea of romantic relationships is simply an exchange of social value, regardless of the dominant heteronormative idea of romance in mass media (for instance, representing in *jōsei-muke* AVs; see Chapter 4). Drawing from Yoshiko’s comment, however, “it shouldn’t be that difficult” to find such a romantic relationship which eventually leads to marriage. This comment suggests that Yoshiko believes that romantic relationships based on mutual commitment are nothing rare but common, as in a sense that many people would have no trouble finding one. Her frustration possibly comes from this idea of commonness.

Towards the end of my field journey, I again met Yoshiko for a few drinks. Holding a glass of mocktail in a cheap chain izakaya, we caught up about recent matters. This is when I learned that Yoshiko’s main interest had shifted from *konkatsu* to a male therapist. Yoshiko kept talking about a male therapist, Eiji, who lives in Fukuoka¹¹⁷.

“I met him on Twitter, and eventually we started to talk everyday via DM¹¹⁸, from ‘good morning’ to ‘good night’. We’re like a couple. I am thinking of going to Fukuoka, taking some days off. It’s a bit far but I’m sure it’d be worth it”

said Yoshiko excitedly. I have to confess here that my instant impression was “strange”. Yoshiko and Eiji, they had never met each other. It would be more understandable, at least for

¹¹⁷ Southwest of Japan, which is about 1,000km away from Tokyo.

¹¹⁸ Direct message service on Twitter.

me, if they had shared a certain physicality; that is, meeting up or having intimate time as a therapist and a client. Besides, Eiji's attitude towards Yoshiko was a bit incomprehensive considering he was a professional male therapist. If he were based on Fukuoka which is 1,000 km away from Tokyo, what would be the point of promoting himself to Yoshiko? Perhaps, Eiji himself found Yoshiko attractive as a woman (only via DM on Twitter) and was willing to develop a "non-commodified" romantic relationship with her (here I mean a heteronormative romantic relationship with the possibility to develop into a marriage, as Yoshiko has desired). Seeing my confusion, Yoshiko admitted "I know it sounds strange because we have never met each other. But this kind of constant care and daily commitment is something I have been looking for in men". Despite of my dubious reaction, Yoshiko seemed happy for some kind of relationship with Eiji. It was clear that Yoshiko had been craving for heterosexual attention and as such, the daily interaction with Eiji appeared stable enough to fulfil her desire.

Later Yoshiko went to Fukuoka (she texted me about it) and found out that Eiji was actually married. "It is a bit of shock, but I think I knew it somehow. We talked about it and agreed that we both have feelings for each other", Yoshiko told me after the short trip to Fukuoka, in a café while sipping a cup of coffee. Summing up her explanation, Yoshiko met Eiji in Fukuoka, and he charged her a much lower price compared to the price that was shown on his business online website as "he had a special feeling for her". After having an intimate moment at a love hotel, they went for dinner and Eiji opened up to Yoshiko about his personal matters. Eiji told Yoshiko that he would still continue their "relationship" and meet her whenever he comes to Tokyo during business trips. Hearing this story, I could not help myself getting upset with Eiji's selfishness, although it would be cruel of me to say what Eiji had done to Yoshiko seemed nothing but *irokoi eigyō*. Yoshiko looked convinced and nodded a lot while explaining the situation to me. Even though Eiji might have a feeling for her, it is an extramarital affair outside of marriage, which puts Yoshiko into a very difficult position according to Japanese family law. For worse, it is also possible to assume that Eiji is just playing around with Yoshiko just to keep her more than a client but less than a friend with benefits. The fact that Eiji has charged her even it is less than regular (but this is also Yoshiko's perspective) triggers my doubt.

Beyond all these concerns, Yoshiko prioritised the feeling of being cared regardless of Eiji's ulterior motives. Yoshiko perhaps is aware of Eiji's intension but still "desires to believe" their romance. Yoshiko's statement, "After all, I really like him" demonstrated well her strong will to believe in her romance with Eiji. Yoshiko even looked much happier and livelier than when we talked about her *konkatsu* experience. The presence of Eiji, although it can only seem *irokoi eigyō* to me, gives Yoshiko emotional fulfilment and vigorous life, on which I have nothing

more to say to her considering her happiness. In contrast to her experience at series of *konkatsu* party which requires heteronormative social codes, I would argue that commodified recognition is much more rationale as Yoshiko prioritise emotional satisfaction, in other words, recognition. It could perhaps be argued that it is an unconscious challenge of Yoshiko to the still dominant gendered idea of a romantic relationship leading to marriage, which requires a different kind of exchange of values: youth on the side of the women is exchanged with the financial capacity and the ability to take care of a household. While commodified recognition frees women from undertaking unpaid emotional labour often required in non-commodified relationships, it also embeds their emotional and physical satisfaction within a potentially exploitative economic system.

Recognition over physiological needs

The examples of Yuri and Yoshiko have demonstrated the conflict and struggle between performative (*irokoi eigyô*) and pure romantic relationship. The idea of *virtuality*, the co-existence of non-commercial and commercial intimacy is in the end just a theory for a practical reason. The truth is they are infused with each other. As a part of participant observation, every story happens in front of my eyes, in the same way with Yuri's and Yoshiko's. Feeling anything pure, or I say "authentic" is inevitable. It is therefore understandable to seek romance which leads to autonomous mutual commitments even in the realm of the commodified fantasy. The next and last example of Arisa in this sense is perhaps a bit different, as she has been clear about what she craves for. Arisa is not interested in any "pure" romantic relationship; rather her desire is purely to attain recognition of her femininity.

Arisa was a 20 years-old university student, whose major was nursing studies, dreaming to become a hospital nurse. We had met at an *eromen* event, at which I learned that this was Arisa's first visits to such a series of events. On the second meeting, I asked her out for coffee/interview in Shinjuku. Arisa, in my first impression, seemed like an average Japanese university student who was polite and reserved and busy with studying and a part-time job. Sitting on sofa in a cute café (on Arisa's request) that was full of young women, we had green tea cake with coffee. "I am so happy that I have been to the event. That took me a lot of courage actually", said Arisa with a big smile. At this point, I realised that for many women I had encountered during my field work it was a pleasure to be able to find a person to talk about their sexual desires. There still is a stigma for women talking about sex. But sexual desire has no gender. This is perhaps the main reason why my informants are talkative and open about

very personal matters. Having that in mind, I was bit surprised by Arisa's openness when she said, "I am virgin but so interested in such things". I then had to ask her about her first encounter with "such things". Without any hesitation, she continued:

"During elementary school, I found pornographic magazines behind a public toilet in the park, which triggered my interest. I often watched my father's AVs with a female friend of mine when both of my parents were out at work. And my friend and I showed our genitals to each other and did some lesbian play together. Later, as a high school student, I used to watch free-version of GIRL'S CH. Now I am 20 years old and have a credit card so I can purchase a subscription of *jōsei-muke* AVs and event tickets".

Hearing her story, I might have expressed surprised face which Arisa grinned as she convinced her inner rebelliousness. For a woman in 20s myself who has been through a similar trait in search for sexuality, it was no surprise. However, that instant reaction was perhaps resulting from my anxiety to appear like an adult as well as a studious researcher, since the discussion of child sexuality is a taboo for many researchers due to the methodological and ethical issues. However, in the report that is published by The Japanese Association for Sex Education in 2019, 29.2% of female middle school student (from age 12 to 15) has dated with their romantic counterparts, 12.6% has experienced kiss, and 4.5% for sexual intercourse. It is thus not extraordinary that people find sex very curious in their early age.

"If you have an experience with a girl, you are not virgin", I replied to Arisa. But her reaction was dubious: "Really? But I never really liked a girl. My problem is a lack of experience with a man. I am thinking of going to *jōsei-muke fūzoku* or host clubs", said Arisa. Here another surprise to me. Although it is not beyond my imagination as the words *yarahata*, an acronym of "*yarazu ni hatatsi*" (virgin by twentieth) implies sex as a rite of passage to adulthood and degrades those who has no sexual experience as immature and unattractive (Shibuya 2003). What strikes me the most here is that her rationale of losing virginity should rely on the sex industry. Simultaneously, the report of Sex Education (2019) shows that only 36.7% of female university students have experienced sexual intercourse. *Yarahara* therefore is not only an anacronym but also should be considered a myth which puts unnecessary pressure on youths.

"Why do you think you have to pay for such services? It costs a lot for a student. Besides, the penile-vaginal penetration is actually illegal", I said to her calmly but persuasively. "Oh no, but I think men would only treat a women like me if I pay for that", said Arisa with an awkward smile. Asking for the reason that she feels the necessity of money to interact with men, Arisa

explained to me, “I cannot have a proper conversation with men. Even in the tutorial class at my university, if a guy asks me for an opinion, my face would turn into a Buddha”. The face of Buddha (*hotoke no kao*) in Japanese signifies either the calm and gentle face or the face of the dead. I believe what she has meant is the latter, considering the way she has dropped her eyes. I sensed there was something that disturbed her from having interactions with men. When I asked what had happened to her, Arisa explained as follows.

In sum, Arisa had a crush on her class mate in high school, and she attempted to confess her feelings to him. She then got rejected and what was worse, she found out the guy called her “a girl who looks like a cockroach” on Twitter. Since this harsh experience, Arisa had to consider herself as “ugly”. From my third person’s perspective, this seems a bitter teenage story; however, the influence on Arisa’s perception of herself is tremendous. The negative recognition from her crush left a stain on Arisa’s heart, which left her with a warped mind. A psychiatrist, Tamaki Saitō (2013) who specialises in teenage suicide and *hikikomori*¹¹⁹(social withdrawal) has argued that the negative recognition or the lack of recognition could cause existential problems especially among youth as their societal realm is confined. In Arisa’s case, it is arguably due to the fact that her reputation has been hurt in a public space such as Twitter by the guy she once has had special feelings for. Coupled with her excessive curiosity about sex, Arisa’s desire for recognition appears to have a single solution: paying for a chance to lose her virginity.

A couple weeks after our first meeting, I met Arisa again at the bimonthly SILK LABO festival. Accompanied by Yoshiko, we moved to a karaoke box after the event in order to have a chat. “Owing to you, Maiko, I am now trying to make new social circles outside of my university”, said Arisa. I then recalled that I had told her to explore new social life apart from her student life, such as the fan community of *jōsei-muke* AVs to connect with other women who might have similar problems with herself. Feeling a bit of responsibility, I was relieved to see Arisa’s smile on her face. While sipping an orange juice from the all-you-can-drink bar at karaoke, Arisa told us that she had started a new part-time job. “It is a modelling job, actually. Wearing a lingerie and posing at a random love hotel”, said Arisa confidently. I was honestly in shock, because it sounded extremely a pornographic job and was different from what I had meant by “new social life”. Looking at Yoshiko, she also seemed surprised and asked Arisa where she had found such a job. “The man whom I’ve met on Twitter asked me to be a model”,

¹¹⁹ *Hikikomori* (social withdrawal) is a condition in which one would not go outside of his/her room. In 2016, the number of Hikikomori is estimated more than 700,000 (Saitō 2016) and it has been a social issue in Japan.

said Arisa, which made Yoshiko and I at a loss for words. Arisa, on the other hand, looked happy and confident for the entire time. Leaving the karaoke and seeing Arisa off in the opposite direction, Yoshiko told me “Arisa-chan’s new job...I’m dubious of that...and have heard of nasty men on Twitter selling young women’s naked photos in high price to many vulgar men while paying relatively little to young female models. That’s what Arisa-chan is doing, I guess”. This was no more than Yoshiko’s assumption; however, the phenomenon is known as *kosatsu* (private shooting); private shooting of pornographic materials and recruitment of female model is posted on Twitter with a hashtag and those contents are sold online or posted foreign porn streaming sites¹²⁰. Due to its nature of independent business, it is concerned as a new form of a hotbed of sexual exploitation as it is often associated with underage and non-consensual sex, being sold online without pixelisation (Takano 2020). Although involvement in such phenomenon seems “dodgy”, Arisa has apparently a place to restore her confidence as a woman by performing a sexual subject that is similar to female characters in (*jōsei-muke*) AVs.

Since then, Arisa’s search for recognition of femininity had escalated to a level I had never expected. After a couple of months since I last met Arisa, I had a tea with Yoshiko after an *eromen* event. “Arisa is not showing up to events these days”, I said. Yoshiko informed me that Arisa was constantly going to host club in which she had made more than 2 million JPY¹²¹ debt. In order to pay off her debt, Arisa is now working as a female escort touring (*jungyō*) across Japan. Touring (*jungyō*) is a term to describe a when a female escort changes her location and her affiliation with a particular shop over a short period of time. That is because “a new face” (*shin-jin*) of the shop is often promoted and is likely to achieve frequent nominations from customers. Touring (*jungyō*) therefore is a means to earn high amounts of money in a short time for female escorts like Arisa. This is based on my assumption from talking to other female escorts. Arisa might need a lot of money to continue going to host club to support her favourite man. Besides, from Yoshiko’s understanding, Arisa had stopped going to university and works exclusively as an escort.

Summarising Arisa’s story, there is a significant motivation at the heart of her behaviour; that is, craving for recognition of her femininity. The negative recognition from her crush has damaged Arisa’s self-realisation as a woman, which she overcomes by performing as a sexual object in the realm of the *fūzoku* industry and neglecting her student life. The question is what

¹²⁰ There are increasing numbers of *kosatsu* AVs on FC2, a web hosting company based on US.

¹²¹ 12,500GBP (1GBP = 160 JPY)

is the powerful motivation behind Arisa's behaviour which has led her to dynamically shift her life as a university student to a female escort?

From a psychiatrist's point of view, Tamaki Saitō (2013) has argued that many Japanese young people are facing a problem which they prioritise recognition over physiological needs. Saitō points out that adolescents are required to perform a certain "*kyara*" (in short of *kyaractā*, character in English) in a school class so that they can communicate with others well. The point of *kyara* is that it eliminates the complexity of human persona and condenses it into a single *kyara* that is appreciable and comprehensive to others. This is also a consequence of the nature of Japanese society, in which harmonious communication with others is considered as an important ability. The emphasis on the communication skills does not only happen at school but also in workplace, neighbourhood, and family. Again, note that the "communication skills" here is not the ability to present one's opinions and feelings but to perform a certain *kyara*, an artificial persona to create a harmonious environment. Retaining the theory of face by Kiyokazu Washida (1998, see Chapter 5), one's social identity varies according to different social settings. We can therefore argue that the self is an assemblage of different personas and constantly balancing it with each other. However, the problem arises when one's perception of the self is relying too much on a singular *kyara*. This occurs especially by having a small number of social bubbles. Thus, Saitō has argued that *kyara* can enrich interactions with others but at the same time, it limits one's personal growth by reinforcing the performance of a singular persona. The negative feedback by others, for instance being labelled "a loser" can be internalised into one's mind and body and become an existential issue. This is because *kyara* is a relativistic value and fragile as it can be changed by any incident, in comparison to the attainment of recognition through human dignity.

Nonetheless, in Arisa's case, she has decided to label herself a *kyara* that is a sexual woman who instigates others' (men) desire and achieves pleasure by being desired. From a heartbroken "loser" to sexual woman, Arisa has accomplished to change her *kyara*, restore her femininity, and prevent herself from existential crisis, and she seemed very satisfied with her choice. The choice which Arisa has made is a subjective; however, the situation which she puts herself is intersubjective and has a power dimension. The idea of "sexual woman", despite of her efforts for identification, only exists with male sexual desire (Benjamin 1988). This also means that Arisa always internalises a risk of sexual indifference from men that would cause her an existential crisis.

Sincerity, Projective Identification, and the Desire to Believe

The stories of my three interlocutors, Yuri, Yoshiko and Arisa, has demonstrated that they sincerely believe their own version of selves and romantic relationships within a milieu in which *irokoi eigyō* and recognition is commodified, ignoring all the complexity of human relationships. I employ *virtuality* by Bruce Kapferer (2004) to signify the unique social setting of the realm of commodified recognition and *irokoi eigyō*. While Kapferer's term describes the sociocultural phenomenon of multiple reality, there is a need to (re)define the idea of ritual. Unlike Victor Turner's original use of the term (1969), I define ritual is a "mode of framing activities" (Seligman et al 2008) that is embodied by sincerity of the participant who plays a part of it (see Chapter 6). The creation of the world of "as if" or "could be" that couples with actors' sincerity are crucial components of ritual; however, encompass a contradiction in its definition. The ritual, the realm of "as if" or "could be", cannot be accomplished without the participants' sincerity, that is, an autonomous will to believe into authenticity of the ritual to oneself. This is where I draw the line of *irokoi eigyō*. While *jōsei-muke* adult industry, such as *fūzoku* and host club manifests to provide *iyashi* or short escape from everydayness, it could easily extend to female clients' emotional life, making them believe to be in "pure relationship" or "sexually attractive woman" in Arisa's case. I have argued that liminal/liminoid space could be a sanctuary for women in Japan, yet the dominant heteronormative discourse that women should not to disclose sexual desire is powerful (see Chapter 5). The question therefore is what the long-term involvement in the ritual influences on individuals?

Seligman et al (2008) gives an example of a romantic relationship. The romantic relationship itself is a shared subjunctive of "as if", rather than it constituted "as is" as an objective status quo. In order to sustain this shared subjunctive, people constantly have to keep acting as if they love each other out of their sincerity; otherwise, the relationship would be likely to fall apart. By denouncing the authenticity as in the way that is presented in films or literature, Seligman et al (2008) put an emphasis on the importance of action and language, on the physicality of ritual. The words "I love you" for instance, despite its inclusion of doubts whether one says this with a hidden intention or not, is a significant vehicle to contribute to the shared subjunctive. This long-term performance would shape groups and individual boundaries from outside of the ritual they belong to, which then becomes part of sociocultural identities. In the analysis of mental patient, Goffman similarly spoke of the construction of the self: "[t]he self, then, can be seen as something that resides in the arrangements prevailing in a social system for its members. The self in this sense is not a property of the person to whom it is attributed, but

dwells rather in the pattern of social control that is exerted in connection with the person by himself and those around him (1961:168). In other words, environment and people around influence one's identity formation. I argue that the long-term involvement in a confined realm, in this context, a milieu in which performative seduction and recognition is commodified, would affect one's perception of the world of romance and social relationship. One furthermore would contribute to the production of a certain view by becoming a part of it. Such mental state is also called codependency; that is, "[a] codependent *person* is someone who, in order to sustain a sense of ontological security, requires another individual, or set of individuals, to define her (or his) wants; she or he cannot feel self-confident without being devoted to the needs of others" (Giddens 1993:89). Giddens defined such codependency as fixed relationship as it underlies role separation. A fixed relationship however is not necessarily negative but when it links to antagonism of parties it could be an issue. Giddens' analysis was based on cases which two parties mutually depend on "alterity" which each party provides. To apply this idea to the case of my interlocutors, I argue that recognition is only to be bought and exchanged, which means one's ontological security is secured via monetary transactions, leaving a counterpart receiving financial supports while other self-fulfilling serving benefits.

However, it has to be emphasised here that my interlocutors, Yuri, Yoshiko, and Arisa are satisfied with their life choices. Their satisfaction can be explained by the roles they get to play in the nature of fixed relationship in the same way as *kyara*, which can be a source for recognition for a part of one's identity, especially that of femininity. Returning to the point of rituals, it has already been discussed that sincerity plays of important factor to their belief. Sincerity itself can only be performed by physical and verbal components, as Seligman et al (2008) argued with example of a romantic relationship. Considering these points, I argue that physicality, or moments with their *oshi*, or favourites are significant to their belief. My concern here is that Yuri and Yoshiko, they have known that their *oshi* or "lover" is a professional male escort and for Arisa she was aware of the fact that her confidence as a woman was only achieved through monetary transaction. Regardless, their motivation is driving from their hope or desire that their feeling is coherent to themselves because of their ontological necessity. In this way, I argue that such mental state is not a false consciousness in classic Marxist term that signifies the notion of misperception of their social positionalities and interests. Steven Lukas (2011), in his defence of false consciousness, argues that "people typically exhibit all kinds of irrationality, including wishful and magical thinking. In particular, they can exhibit what has been given the name of false consciousness" (2011:28).

Rather, “desire to believe” underlies the necessity of projective identification of one’s world view. Especially in Yuri and Yoshiko’s case, it is their desire to find “special other”, echoing with Giddens’ romantic love which “fastens upon and idealises another, and it projects a course of future development” (1993:43). This has been illustrated when Yuri and Yoshiko spoke of their personal relationship that would hopefully leads to marriage. Although they believed themselves to have involved in pure relationship that requires mutual commitments, the fact Yuri and Yoshiko had to blind themselves from obvious “red flags” demonstrated that it was only a projection resulting from their desire to believe. For Arisa, it is yet unknown how and why she has been to host club and made a huge amount of debt. From my observation, the case of Arisa was projective identification to her self-image of sexually attractive women. And her desire is harshly supported by exploitive men who consider young women are valuable in the pornographic market. I would thus argue that commodified recognition provides ontological security while it also causes emotional conflicts for those who desire to believe their own projections. I often wonder whether my interlocutors would ever face difficulties such as getting tired of trading and seek non-commodified relationship at any point. Nonetheless, there is no place for me to make judgmental comments on them as they seem satisfied with their choices.

Conclusion

This chapter has closely looked at the life stories of the three interlocutors, Yuri, Yoshiko, and Arisa in correspondence with their moral career in a milieu of *irokoi eigyō* and commodified recognition. Spending a long amount of time with them, their understanding and romance and intimate social relationship has changed over this period of time. It has then become apparent that “desire to believe” was a driving force to seek for their own projections of relationships, despite it has to be bought and exchanged.

Yuri, a female escort herself, seemed to understand all too well the emotional labor on which the system which she involved and yet used it as a means to reduce stress from her physically and emotionally demanding work. As Yuri said; “we [her, *eromen*, and male escorts] are all in highly demanding industry so that able to share a lot in common”, she found an ease in interacting with those men who work in a similar environment with her. By sharing similar complains, Yuri enjoyed compassion with her counterparts. There was a circle of performance and consumption within the realm of commodified intimacy. It has become, however, vicious when she found Mitsu, a “business/private partner” in her own words. Mitsu’s intension here

is still unknown; however, it could be argued that seeking a non-commodified relationship in this unique milieu carries a high risk due to the misconception of what is a commodity or not.

Similarly, Yoshiko, who had been enthusiastically looking for a potential husband, gives up *konkatsu*, marriage hunting, and decided to be in a romantic relationship with a married male therapist, Eiji. If taking Yuri's surroundings is already based on commodified intimacy in a literal manner, it might be argued that Yoshiko's is based on non-commodified ones. However, marriage hunting is substantially the same, as it opens up a market place for romantic partners. While in the *jōsei-muke fūzoku* industry it is an exchange of money with emotions and sexual services, the contemporary marriage is based on highly gendered exchange of values; men for money and women for youth. Comparing those systems of exchange, it is actually rational for Yoshiko who has sought emotional satisfaction in a man to fall in love with a male escort. The same applies to Mitsu above. Eiji's intention remains a mystery. However, he would not be turned away as long as Yoshiko keeps paying for his service, unless he quits the job per se. For Yoshiko, even though she has to finish the relationship with Eiji at some point, she could potentially find another male escort to rely on. Questions and contradiction (for instance the reason of Eiji charging Yoshiko for their intimate moments) underlies in the nexus of performative and pure relationship.

To demonstrate a slightly different perspective, the chapter has looked at the case of Arisa. A 20 years-old university student who had a traumatic past with a boy during high school regained confidence as a woman in the sex industry. By playing a certain *kyara*, a persona, Arisa relabeled herself as overly sexual woman that was similar to those ones in (*jōsei-muke*) AVs. What surprised me most is that Arisa prioritises this performative persona over her university life. Retaining from Tamaki Saitō's analysis of *kyara* (2016), however, it is inevitable outcome for Arisa to shift dynamically from her life as a student to a female escort because recognition is necessary to sustain her own existence. The problem is on the other hand, there is an always risk for her as a sexual woman as this version of herself is only determined by the male gaze.

By demonstrating the in-depth ethnographic description, I have argued that all three of my interlocutors have shaped their view according to the confined system of commercial relationship/recognition by the longi-term involvement as in the way Goffman (1961) spoke of the construction of the self. Drawing from the idea of ritual, it has also been discussed that this emotional and physical sincerity does not only produce a certain world view but also make participants contributing to reproduce it (Seligman et al 2008). As the self is constructed through the environment and people around. The crucial point here is that commodified

recognition well-serves as a liminal/liminoid space for women in Japan in which it has yet the dominant idea that women should not openly express their sexuality desire, my interlocutors are seeking for ontological security in such a milieu with very much heteronormative idea of romantic relationship and womanhood. I therefore have to emphasise that in virtuality where different social rules coexist, the difference of non-commercial and commercial relationship is infused with each other and often causing emotional conflicts in those who have “desire to believe” their own projections.

In this the chapter, it has become apparent that projective identification is a significant driving force, even though it is attained through monetary transaction. It has to be again emphasised that the three interlocutors, Yuri, Yoshiko and Arisa seem satisfied with their decisions, although there is a possibility that they attempted to create a coherence of their feeling with each situation. The remaining question, however, is a system of their understanding of romantic relationship and money. In the following chapter, I will therefore conceptualise commodified recognition from socioeconomic perspectives, with a question for its ethics in contemporary Japanese society.

Chapter 8 Towards an Ethics of Commodified Recognition

Introduction

“I like spending most of my income for a favourite”, said Yuri while sipping a cocktail. Similar phrases have been repeated in interviews with other female fans. It has become apparent that female fans receive recognition from *eromen* and *lovemen* at a series of intimate fan events. The previous chapter demonstrates the moral career of fans and indicates that commodified recognition fulfils fantasy projections, which results in long-term involvement in a closed system.

It has to be emphasised again that *jôsei-muke* AVs and its male actors, *eromen* and *lovemen* are sales packages which SOD has produced, aiming for business expansion. Initially created to promote the genre of *jôsei-muke*, *eromen* and *lovemen* events are nothing more than fan meetings. However, the highly intimate interactions with *eromen* and *lovemen* (for instance, exemplified by the business collaboration with *jôsei-muke fuzoku* shops) does not only shape fans’ identities but also provide recognition, as already discussed in previous chapters. The important point here is that this recognition appears reciprocal: it actually serves the interests of both female fans and *eromen* and *lovemen*. The more female fans invest in their *oshi*, the more they gain recognition. The nature of this potentially exploitative system of commodified recognition has been analysed and discussed on the basis of the ethnographic descriptions in the previous chapters. My final attempt is thus to conceptualise and to sketch a possible ethics of commodified recognition in relation to its significance to identity formation in consumer societies.

This chapter starts with defining the commodification and consumption of recognition, corresponding with previous literature on commodification of intimacy (Constable 2008, Takeyama 2010, 2016 and Koch 2020). My contribution here is that in *oshi-katsu*, in which female fans are not aiming to win the love of their *oshi*, what is being bought and exchanged is recognition. It is the capacity to provide support itself that fulfils female fans’ need for recognition. The crucial question then revolves around how commodified recognition influences one’s own agency for self-realisation. By referring to David Graeber’s essay on consumption (2011), I will argue that commodified recognition is consumed, driven by a desire for some kind of social relation. My next concern will be how commodified recognition is different from non-commodified recognition, which will be addressed by examining commodity and gift exchange, following the work of Monica Prasad (1999). The interview

with Asuka, an owner of a *jōsei-muke fūzoku* shop, will demonstrate that in fact the distinction between gift and commodity is nothing but an ideal type, that in reality becomes much more difficult to ascertain. Recognition that is achieved through monetary transaction functions for self-realisation of those who purchase, but in order to maintain this sense of satisfaction, an ongoing, long-term investment in the *oshi* has to be made. The chapter then will discuss some of the sacrifices that the quest for recognition demands. Arisa (see Chapter 7) who had to throw herself in the sex industry in order to pay off her debt in host club shall serve as an example. Employing structural vulnerability (Quesada et al 2011), my final concern is how to conceptualise the potentially exploitive nature of commodified recognition.

The Commodification and Consumption of recognition

Nicole Constable's review *The Commodification of Intimacy: Marriage, Sex, and Reproductive Labour* (2008) has discussed the increasing anthropological interest in the commodification of intimacy in relation to the interconnectivity of global and local economies, cross-border marriages, migrant domestic labour, and sex workers. In this review, Constable clarified commodification as "the way in which intimacy or intimate relations can be treated, understood, or thought of as if they have entered the market: are bought and sold; packaged and advertised; fetishized, commercialised; or objectified; consumed or assigned values and prices; and linked in many cases to transnational mobility and migration, echoing a global capitalist flows of goods" (2008:50). The term intimate relations, in Constable's definition, denotes "social relationships that are – or give the impression of being – physically and/or emotionally close, personal, sexually intimate, private, caring, or loving" (ibid). The term commodification of intimacy accommodates the idea of a social relationship that is assigned value and price and is subsequently available for consumption on the market. To put it differently, within the market in which intimacy is commodified, such social relationships are built upon monetary transactions.

There have been many scholarly attempts to study such social relationships in different contexts. For instance, Gabriele Koch's (2020) study of female sex worker in Japan focussed on the commodified intimacy that is required to create *iyashi* ("healing") for male participants in the gendered economy; Akiko Takeyama (2010, 2016) shed light on the self-commodification of male subjects in her study of Japanese host clubs. Takeyama referred to Constable's definition of commodified intimacy and maintains that male hosts commodify themselves in order to succeed financially, which enables class mobility and presents a

challenge to the conventional masculine archetypes of salarymen. This study of female fans surrounding *eromen* and *lovemen* also indicates that *eromen* and *lovemen* commodify themselves and perform according to female fans' desire in order to gain fame and cash. Simultaneously, the research has seen male individuals who work across platforms, performing as *eromen* and *lovemen*, male therapists, and hosts. I therefore argue that commercial forms and service configurations of the commodification of intimacy targeting heterosexual female consumers vary according to different emotional and physical demands and consumers' financial capacities.

Regarding the gendered economy, Gabriele Koch's research of female sex workers in Japan (2020) pointed out that female sex workers provide *iyashi*, or healing for male white-collar workers to restore their productivity. The idea of *iyashi*, according to Koch, is based on a notion of feminised labour; therefore, the commodification of intimacy is embedded in the gendered economy. Closely examining the term *iyashi* and its conventions, the verb *iyasu* (to heal) signifies medical treatments for instance, healing wounds (*kizu wo iyasu*) or resolving hunger (*ûe wo iyasu*). Ueda Noriyuki (1990), an anthropologist and a frontrunner in the study of *iyashi*, distinguishes *iyashi* from treatment (*chiryô*), because the former provides social connections with others. In his study of Sri Lankan exorcism, Ueda demonstrated that it was lonely individuals whom demons would possess so that the main function of the exorcism is to restore social relationships surrounding those individuals. In other words, *iyashi* can be achieved through interactions with others.

Later, Matsui Takeshi (2013) argued that the attribute *iyashi* had been popularised in the 1990s through consumption trends of services and goods relating to spirituality and the occult. Matsui also pointed out that the term *iyashi*, as in "*kokoro wo nagomaseru*" (melting one's heart) has subsequently become common as it was often used in the marketing of goods and services to promote their healthiness and relaxation. Similar to Koch, Matsui argued that *iyashi* has a gendered double meaning: men receive *iyashi* through the service of women, while women achieve *iyashi* through consumption. Thus, the term *iyashi* has an erotic or sexual connotation for men. Simultaneously, for women to get *iyashi*, consumption of goods and services was encouraged, for instance visiting a spa or aesthetic salons. Such emphasis on relaxation or *iyashi* was often used in the advertisement of *jôsei-muke* AVs and other forms of sexual services (see Chapter 6). Thus, women are assumed to receive *iyashi* through heteronormative sexual attention from good-looking men, such as *eromen* and *lovemen* (and male escorts) as well as physical and sexual relaxation. The important point here is that *iyashi*

provides a sense of euphoria and means to become a better - or it is imagined to be – version of oneself, and most importantly, this is achieved by consumption.

Intimacy and *iyashi* are not identical but closely associated with each another, as both are found in interaction with others – not necessarily only with human beings – and both are means for self-realisation. The term *iyashi* for instance signifies a broader sense of relaxation, which entails intimacy as a part of its function. Following Matsui’s analysis, the mantra of *iyashi* appears in many advertisements and sometimes even in description of a human personality, as in “*iyashi-kei*”, or “therapeutic type”. According to Hanebayashi Yuzu (2012), a relationship counsellor, an “*iyashi-kei*” woman is aware of herself with confidence and composure and is able to love herself and others. This resonates with female sex workers who emphasise the importance to perform a maternal role that acknowledges the male client’s “efforts, burden and hard work” (Koch 2020: 108). *Iyashi* is produced in intimate interactions through a performance of recognition. Note that the idea of intimacy is already encompassed in personalised *iyashi*, as condition for a relationship which brings relaxation through contact with others. Koch (2020) indicated that Takeyama (2010, 2016) did not mention *iyashi* in her research on host club in Japan; however, I find similarities with Takeyama’s analysis of restoration of femininity among the female clientele of host clubs and the idea of *iyashi*. Whether with hosts or female sex workers, clients are empowered and encouraged to boost their masculinity or femininity through the interactions with their counterparts. This highly gendered system, I argue, is a significant component of the commodification of recognition.

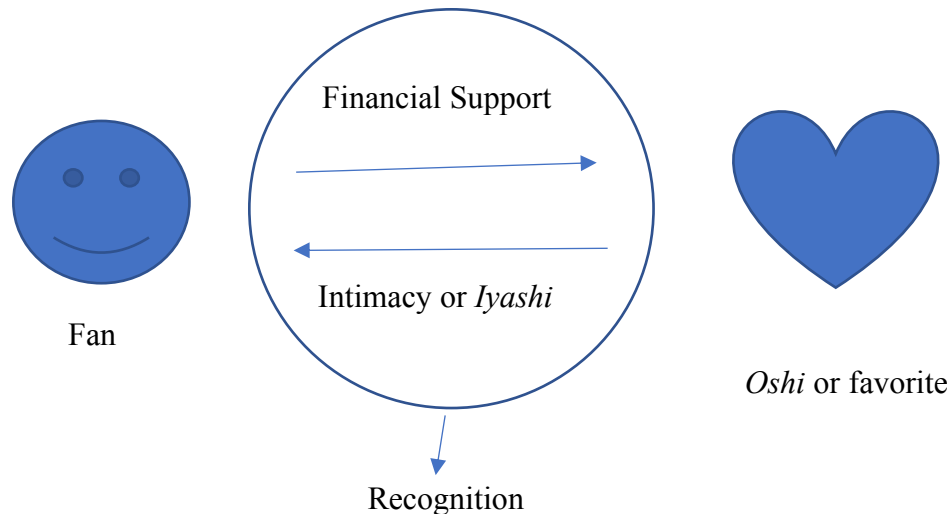
From my own observations, what is being purchased and consumed is intimacy and *iyashi* and this economic transaction is transformed into recognition for consumers (see attached picture below). It also must be emphasised that winning the affection of *oshi*, or favourites (male host, male therapists, and *eromen* and *lovemen* see Chapter 5) is not the main purpose of the clientele; rather having *oshi-katsu*, or supporting activity is itself a means to fulfil self-realisation. A strong sense of devotion to *oshi* is considered as “*aisuru koto*”, or to love (Tsutsui 2019) since such a form of loving does not require anything in return. While the fundamental meaning of unconditional love is in question, I would argue that “loving” and supporting in the context *oshi-katsu* is undergirded by the notion of selfless devotion as a virtue in Japan. Selflessness has been widely discussed as a gendered expectation, especially in regards to motherhood (Lebra 1984, White 1987) since it is defined by self-sacrifice for the family. In a broader sense, it concerns one’s social identity, allowing one to define what/whom to belong through long-term devotion. Here I argue that on the surface, *oshi-katsu* reproduces a conservative idea of feminine virtue. Self-worth is found in the valiant support selflessly given

to others (the case of Arisa will show how far some fans are willing to go). Centering female pleasure would smack of selfishness and, crucially, would not lead to the complex social and financial relationships that emerge from *oshi-katsu*. Thus, the idea of pleasure has to be counterbalanced by an appeal to self-sacrifice. While carnal pleasure certainly plays a role, the main satisfaction that the fans I talked to derived from supporting their favorites was the experience of themselves as making a difference to their favorites' fortunes (figuratively and literally); that is, as having agency in the world. Being perceived as an attractive, feminine woman is only one part of the recognition; the other is to be recognised as someone who can change things.

Yet recognition is a "vital human need" according to Charles Taylor (1994:26) and the lack of recognition is a cause for existential crisis, as Saitô Tamaki (2013) argues. In the previous chapter on the moral career of female fans of *jôsei-muke* AVs, I have demonstrated that their desire for recognition is geared towards putting themselves into an economic system in which recognition becomes a commodity that is bought and exchanged. The more one purchases or commodifies oneself, the more recognition one gets. The frequency of consumption or commodification directly leads to self-realisation; the system is painless and perhaps frees individuals from gendered expectations that often dominate the pursuit of non-commodified love (for instance for women to be young and beautiful; for men to have financial capacity and emotional strength). In this way, the commodification of recognition functions as an alternative to pre-existing heteronormative discourses on gender and sexuality, which allows individuals to realise their desires through consumption.

Takeyama (2016) has captured this phenomenon and understood it as part of an affect economy; that is "in this economy, promises for a better future are interwoven in economic, symbolic, and affective exchanges. Seemingly autonomous workers and consumers seek to fulfil their own hopes and dreams by meeting the desire of others. Put differently, they seduce one another to satisfy themselves" (2016:173). Regarding the definition of "affect" that is widely and interdisciplinary discussed in contemporary academia as alternative perspectives to the more individual notion of "emotion", Takeyama focused on attitudes for a new possible imagined future for hosts and female clientele, rather than metaphysical discussion. Affect in Takeyama's definition therefore is the "bodily capacities to sense events surrounding the body, apprehend them, and (re)orient one's feelings, thoughts, and acts in order to communicate with embodied others" (2016:170). Takeyama also argued that affect is multidimensionally relational and central to subject formation, while asserting its fluidity.

Although affect may appear as personal, subjective matter, Takeyama pointed out that the affect economy is now a global phenomenon of millennial capitalism. This echoes the analysis of “economies of affect” by Analiese Richard and Daromir Rudnyckyj in 2009, which has demonstrated that affect is not merely an object of circulation but a “mode of action upon action” (2009:62) for self-formation in a neoliberal economic system. Both Richard’s research of Mexican NGO networks and Rudnyckyj’s analysis of religious reform in Indonesia indicated the role of affect has to produce efficiency in economy more than economy per se, as affect is implemented in governing the self, communities, and institutions. Richard and Rudnyckyj made a significant distinction between emotion and affect; the first is an individual matter while the latter signifies intersubjectivity. This framework provides the methodological means to understand the contemporary economy in which affect, in other words, self-formation in intersubjective society, is entailed in our economic life. Recalling Takeyama’s comments on fluidity and uncertainty of affect, however, there is still space to discuss how this post-industrial economic system “affects” our sociocultural life and how this system changes our perception of the self, especially in this particular context of commodified recognition.



Agency of self-realisation

In order to discuss the relationship between the economy of commodified recognition and its sociocultural impact, let me closely examine some of the statements of my interlocutors. In the previous chapter on the moral career of female fans, the cases of Yuri, Yoshiko, and Arisa demonstrated that those three had determined to act according to their desires or self-interest

regardless of social norms. The iconic phrase that has been common among those three that caught my attention is “This is what I have decided for myself no matter what”. This sentence suggests a strong sense of justification for self-determination, allowing no criticism. I have argued that their “desire to believe” each of their projections in the closed milieu of the fandom contributes to the production of a certain social system. As commodified recognition is secured by financial commitment, such justification is only possible with financial independency: “I do what I want with money I have earned myself”. Such a strong statement suggests that they are their own agency of self-realisation. As it is so, it also often forecloses the opportunity to think about its moral and structural implications.

For instance, Yuri and Arisa both works as female escorts. I have already discussed that Yuri earns much more than an average office worker of her age and spends most her earnings on her favourite *eromen* (and *lovemen*) and male escorts. Arisa on the other hand, is a newly registered sex worker without any professional massage technique (unlike Yuri) and struggles to pay off the debt which she created through frequent visits to host clubs. Despite of their professional levels, I have argued in the previous chapter that both Yuri and Arisa work hard for recognition that is gained by interactions with their favourites and also with clients. It is also important to notice that Yuri and Arisa seem satisfied with their decision to commodify themselves. Following the sex positive discourse, what they do with their bodies is their responsibility, and no one has any right to criticise them. Yoshiko, on the other hand, who dreams to become the wife of her ideal *eromen*-like man and at the same time constantly purchases the services of the same male escort (who is married with children), believing herself to be his lover. I have also argued in the previous chapter that it might seem rational for Yoshiko who prioritises emotional fulfilment despite of her consistent attendance of *kon-katsu*, or marriage hunting. It is within the range of Yoshiko’s freedom to decide to purchase male escorts simply because such consumption and commodification is legally available in the Japanese market. For my interlocutors, purchasing recognition leads to self-realisation, that is, to experience oneself as having the agency to change one’s and others worlds.

Reflecting these feminist dialectics, a series of attempts to reclaim female sexuality and desire has been witnessed over the last decades. I understand the emergence of feminist or alternative pornography and *jōsei-muke* AVs as a part of this process regardless of their different degrees of socio-political awareness. The mantras “my body my choice” or “women enjoy their sexuality” have thus started to appear in the current sex positive discourse as discussed in Chapter 6. Before making my point, I have to stress my sympathy towards such sex positive attitudes. The visualisation of female sexuality is very important and anyone

should have a right to say “yes or no” to any sex-related matter without any judgment. My concerns here is, rather, that such female empowerment is only gained in the nexus of commodification and consumption.

The problem of consumption has been addressed by David Graeber (2011). From a historical analysis of the words itself, Graeber has defined consumption as “any activity that involves the purchase, use or enjoyment of any manufactured or agricultural product for any purpose other than the production or exchange of new commodities” (2011:491). The driving force for consumption is not in its end but rather in “some sense of object of desire, chosen from a range of products, subject to the whims of fashion” (2011:493). In short, consumption is driven by desire. Desire in turn is “rooted in imagination and tends to direct itself towards some kind of social relation, real or imaginary, and that social relation generally entails a desire for some kind of recognition and hence an imaginative reconstruction of the self” (2011:494). In other words, consumption is a vehicle for the construction of the self and as the self is already intersubjective, consumption is essentially driven by a desire to attain recognition. Consuming a particular good or service creates community for those who have similar interests as is the case with the fan community of *jōsei-muke* AVs, demonstrated in this thesis. On one side, it provides social relations – a sense of belonging – that is crucial to identity formation within the fan community. Consumption creates agency within the self to determine who one is and what one belongs to. But what about the social relation with the *oshi*, in the context of commodified recognition?

As I have discussed in the previous chapter on moral career of female fans, their relation with *oshi* is only guaranteed with long-term financial commitments. For instance, there is a possibility that this condition of monetary transaction – because monthly income is limited – could become a cause for trouble such as addiction and other surrounding social issues that financially affect Yoshiko’s lifestyle (as it happened when Arisa contracted a huge amount of debt at a host club). This is because, as discussed in the previous chapter, what Yoshiko desires is a pure relationship (Giddens 1993), that is, a romantic relationship on a basis of equal give and take. The paradox is that Yoshiko believes to find one through monetary transactions, ignoring the fact that the power of ending the relationship is only in the hand of the male escort. He just has to withdraw from the business in such a situation.

To some extent, the dilemma of commodified recognition is that the social relation with the *oshi* is nothing but fantasy. Unlike Honneth and Taylor who have conceived recognition as mutual transaction, I would argue that those who believe to achieve recognition through *oshi-katsu* are provided with fantasy of having a social relationship with *oshi*. Furthermore, the

crucial point of *oshi-katsu*, especially of the highly intimate variety, is that services are tailored to appear personalised for each fan but in reality, they are not, and is often just a product of labour. Having said so, I have to question how it is different from non-commodified recognition. *Oshi-katsu*, as is often discussed, has a positive effect on the mental welfare of those who have an *oshi*. Simultaneously, it is a common understanding that intimacy is often couple with monetary transaction even in non-commodified relationships.

Commodity and Gift Exchange

The connection between sex and commerce is demonstrated by Monica Prasad (1999) in her essay *The Morality of Market Exchange: Love, Money, and Contractual Justice*. From the perspective of a “John”, a consumer of prostitute, Prasad has criticised traditions of moral economists that claim there is a separation between social life and economic life and privilege social justice and charity over the logic of the market. The point that Prasad has raised here is that prostitution is valued for offering freedom from hypocrisy which would often happen in romantic love and marriage, so that prostitution has a particular morality.

By interviewing 39 people who had been considering whether to purchase a prostitute or not, Prasad has argued that customers of prostitution would enter the transaction as any other service and products available in the market. That is, a decision to make a purchase is not due to a biological need (as is often assumed) but is depending on self-interest or peer pressure from friends and co-workers. Besides, customers’ impressions about prostitution were different according to each negative or positive experience of the service. Such encounters with prostitution suggest that there is little difference between their service and any other service or product in the market, as Prasad has emphasised. Moreover, Prasad has pointed out that there are some voices from customers comparing prostitution with non-commodified romantic relationship and stating its equation of buying and being bought has no hypocrisy and more moral than “relationship that masquerades as a relationship of love” (1999:204).

The important axis of Prasad’s analysis is the dichotomy of gift exchange and commodity exchange, as has been often discussed by many anthropologists. As Prasad noted, gift exchange “occurs between actors in established social relationships and reaffirms these relationships, and gift exchange may therefore be considered to be more intricately involved with a community’s social fabric” (1999:184). Due to this entanglement, gift exchange is often made insincerely or hypocritically, coupling with non-verbal rules and codes, in order to sustain social relationships. On the other hand, commodity exchange “presupposes no prior relationship between

participants, and no particular communal consequence; moreover, the rules of commodity exchange are specified in advance and are nondiscretionary” (ibid). Prasad therefore emphasises the democratic and unambiguous nature of commodity exchange over gift exchange.

Such a clear dichotomy of gift exchange and commodity exchange might be helpful for instance, if consumers themselves can separate both sides and make the most out of it. This discussion reminds me of in-depth conversation with Asuka, the owner of *jōsei-muke fūzoku* shops chain (see Chapter 6). We met at a café in Ikebukuro for an interview and also to catch up. After several meetings, Asuka and I became close as we were the same age. Asked her how things were, she responded “There are some customers who make trouble with male escorts, requiring penetration (which is illegal by law), or being obsessed with an escort”, said Asuka while sipping a cup of tea. Carefully articulating how and what she said in order to protect customers’ private information, Asuka gave me her own thoughts: “I believe my business is to provide women with comfort and opportunities to regain self-esteem. But I also understand that there are some women who cannot separate their own reality and fantasy that we provide as service. So, I have to make clear rules and regulations about what we do or don’t, even though we might potentially lose clientele. That’s is to protect my staff (male escorts) as well as customers”. According to Asuka’s explanation, she had to enforce male escorts not walking customers to the nearest station and interacting via DM on Twitter. This new enforcement reconfirms that what happens in bed only stays in bed and no extension of fantasy into the everydayness would be accepted. “It (walking to station) was only just an extra service as we thought it was nice. I never allow our staffs to seduce customers’ as in *irokoi eigyō* (see Chapter 6) and now have to check their DM with customers”, said Asuka melancholically. What this situation tells that the distinction of gift exchange and commodity exchange is sometimes not clear between service providers and customers. The dichotomy of gift and commodity is rather ideal as Asuka continued, “I think it is just about the lack of culture that women purchasing sexual service. Men have been doing it and separating it from their personal relationships”. Yet I cannot be sure of such gendered generalisation; however, it has become clear that the discussion of emotional labour should be included in the nexus of gift exchange and commodity exchange.

Perhaps in the case of Prasad’s analysis and also that of Elizabeth Bernstein’s “bounded authenticity” (see Chapter 5), it is understood that the emotionality that couples with physical activities only exists in the bedroom. But what happens afterwards? If the feeling in the bedroom were unforgettable, customers would ask for the second time. Even though the “labour” part is one-time thing, emotion affectively remains for both participants so that they

build up a certain relationship out of monetary transaction, the emotions of which can easily spill out of the strictly confined space of the encounter. Takeyama (2016) has illustrated such relationships between hosts/female clients, extended to “personal” or extramarital romance. By demonstrating how married women pursue extramarital romance in host clubs, Takeyama has argued that those can women perform “good wife/good mother” at home while restoring their femininity via relationship with hosts. Simultaneously, their emphasis on “being in the relationship” with hosts signifies that those married women conceive such relationships not just as commodified service but rather one which does function in the same manner as a non-commodified romantic relationship. Takeyama has noted, “[i]n the postindustrial consumer age, with its emphasis on individuality and entrepreneurship, the host club is perceived as an accessible (through expensive) medium for women to transform themselves and attain a state of fulfillment” (2016:133) while arguing its exploitive nature. As I have shown in the previous chapters, such phenomenon might not be always positive, especially when causing bullying among *eromen* and *lovemen* fans (see Chapter 5) and confusing individuals’ understanding of love and recognitions (see Chapter 7).

It is arguably evident that emotion not easily contained and its affective power is taken advantage as seen by *irokoi eigyō*. Besides, once emotion involves – although it is inevitable – it would be extremely difficult to distinguish what is commodity or gift without being strictly aware of its affective nature. In regards to intimacy with monetary transaction, Viviana A. Zalizer has argued that common sense embraces a “hostile world” stance, in which commerce and intimacy should not mix and if they do, that the latter is contaminated. This, however, is not how relationships work in the real world:

“[A]nalysts who assume that intimate relations and monetary transactions are utterly incompatible have difficulty recognising the subtle ways in which people actually match their monetary transfers their various social relations, including intimate ties. (...) Contrary to widespread belief, furthermore, it was not the money involved that determined the relationship’s quality, but the relationship defined the appropriateness of one sort of payment or another.” (2000: 818).

For those who purchase intimate service there is hardly a distinction between non-commodified and commodified recognition, or between a commodity and gift. Asuka herself implied that when she claims her job is to provide women with “safe space to regain self-esteem”, despite of her concern of crossing the boundary between commodity and gift. It is easy to argue from

a “hostile world” point of view that recognition cannot be achieved through monetary transactions. But I have witnessed myself how my informants were happily gaining recognition through commodified services. In this sense, social relations of a client and a customer, or an *oshi* and a fan does function in the same manner with non-commodified ones. The only difference is it has to be accompanied by long-term financial investment of those who purchase services of commodified recognition.

Self-sacrifice of the vulnerable

So, let those who are affluent be in the realm of commodified recognition. My concern has arisen from the case of Arisa, a young woman who sacrificed herself in order to sustain long-term financial investment to gain recognition. A university student who had suffered from the anxiety of being a virgin, she became a female escort and later contracted a huge amount of debt at a host club. As Arisa told me several times, her desire has been consistent: to gain heterosexual recognition in the same way that female AV actors in *jōsei-muke* AVs do.

In order to realise her desire, Arisa put herself on the market of the consumption and commodification of recognition despite of warnings from people who already were in the business. At that time, Asuka and her friends and colleagues advised her not to lose her virginity for a monetary transaction. Arisa however seemed indifferent to such advice as she deeply believed the necessity of money if an ugly woman such as herself wanted to have sex. She later became a client of host club and toured Japan as a sex worker (*jūngyō* see Chapter 7) to make money for her favourite host, at the cost of her university life. Several months after this, I was informed that Arisa was hospitalised in a psychiatry hospital with severe depression. The news was certainly shocking. As I am not an expert in psychology I cannot offer professional judgement here; however, I would like to examine this not uncommon situation according to what has been told to me.

Asuka once has informed me, “there are increasing numbers of young women (such as Arisa) visiting host clubs and *jōsei-muke fūzoku*. Unlike career women or housewives, they don’t have enough money. So ‘naturally’ these young women enter the sex industry or start *papa-katsu* (papa activity)¹²²”. It is a quite common route for a 20 years-old university student to start escorting as is the only and easiest way to come up with a huge amount of money in a short period of time. Recalling the relationship between commodified recognition and identity

¹²² *Papa-katsu* is a form of private escorting. And its popularity has been increasing due to online matching services. The price range changes according to different escorting from accompanying to dining to sex.

formation, it has to be noted that *oshi-katsu* is an easy way to achieve recognition. “Women should be pretty if they want to interact with (good-looking) men, otherwise you have to pay for it”, said Arisa during our first meeting. Self-identifying as ugly, Arisa saw consumption as the only means to interaction with men. She also continued, “If I were a good-looking man, I wouldn’t be dating or even care about a girl like me. As long as I support them financially, they are nice to me”. In her words, consumption is a bridge that allows her to step into the world of womanliness that she has longed for. The consequence of this was her decision to literally sacrifice herself – working as a sex worker in order to pay off the debt, which eventually had led to severe depression.

Here I would like to introduce the idea of structural vulnerability (Quesada et al 2011) that is “a product of class-based economic exploitation and cultural, gender/sexual, and racialised discrimination, as well as complementary process of depreciated subjectivity formation” (2011:340). The term was originally created in medical anthropology in order to instigate a macro-level approach to health and disease of vulnerable groups (for instance, Latinos in the United States), rather than the notion of structural violence that had been primarily used for calling attentions for politico-economic injustice. As Quesada et. Al have indicated, experiences of vulnerability are conditioned by “specific status attributes (i.e., gender, age, ethnicity, etc.), conditions (i.e., legal status, economic and living conditions, etc.), and individual serendipity” (2011:346). In the context of Arisa for instance, her self-identification as ugly woman renders her vulnerable, as well as environmental factor of being a student without any specific skills in the labour market apart from her youth that is highly valued in the sex industry. One might argue that this is a result of her decision making because it “seems” she has had a different life course to choose from. My point here, however, is that a socially vulnerable positionality can not only be defined by attributes that are obvious to third parties but also through self-identification. It is how one imagines to position oneself in a specific society. This also reminded me of Yoshiko’s often repeated statement: “If you are unmarried, people will assume that something is wrong with you”. It is not a question of normative ideas about how marriage should complete the self. What is the most important is that Yoshiko sees herself as alienated from her imagined picture of an adult woman, which does indicate that she experiences some kind of vulnerability.

Quesada et al have also argued that “structural vulnerability implies a critique of the concept of agency because it requires an analysis of the forces that constrain decision making, frame choices, and limit life options” (2001:342). I have already argued above that purchasing recognition empowers women to have agency. But for the vulnerable, commodified

recognition is the only thing that keeps their ontological security. In a way they conceive themselves as socially too vulnerable to achieve recognition in the non-commodified everyday life. Simultaneously, the nature of supporting in *oshi-katsu* is an endless quicksand as it does not have any specific goal or desirable end of the relationship with the *oshi*. In the sense that even though everything else falls apart for instance running out of money for debt, one can still in the end say “I did it for someone else”. By saying so, one can achieve recognition, although pleasure for pleasure’s sake is just that, an end in itself. When commodified recognition in *oshi-katsu* is provided in exchange of self-sacrifice of the vulnerable, I would question its ethics in the market society.

Towards an Ethic of Commodified Recognition

In a country like Japan, individual freedom is guaranteed in free market, which also means that responsibility is individualised. Any personal problem tends to be considered from micro-behaviours of individual with the premise that all individuals are equal, and such belief makes difficult to identify and criticise inequality in the society. Similar to the structural vulnerability of Quesada et al in 2011, there has been much academic interest in Japan, especially from feminists, concerning the contradictions and limitations of liberalism that claims all people “should” be equal nevertheless.

For instance, Yayo Okano (2001) has argued that the premise of liberalism is to criticise the reality of life, for instance any biological and social difference. The emphasis on “should” is distinctive from “is” and indicates a move from the descriptive to the normative. Liberalism thus becomes problematic, according to Okano, when it is brought into association with politics. Once a form of liberalism that already contains the idea of “should” is integrated into politics that conceives of society and individuals, individual freedom and equality are not interpreted as objectives to achieve but they appear as already given as explicitly documented in the Japanese constitution. In such a liberal nation, the government has to protect individuals’ private domain in order not to interfere individual freedom. Okano’s main critique here focuses on how to consider different physical capacities of individuals in such a liberal state. In other words, “society ‘should’ guarantee freedom for individuals. If one ‘is’ experiencing constraint, that is a private matter for oneself” (Okano 2001:19). Such an ignorance to different social attributes of liberalism forecloses a more structural discussion, in a similar way that Quesada et al (2011) demand for structural vulnerability.

The idea of the free market is also supported by liberalism, in the sense that society works if there is demand and supply. As the market has been considered “value-neutral science of human behaviour and social choice” (Sandel 2013:122). However, I have already discussed that consumption is driven by desire, especially for some kind of social relation (Graeber 2011). The market can never be value free or neutral; rather, it is per se a mode of production of value. In this sense, the logic of market is intertwined with our social and cultural activities. This is why, I believe, it is important to question influence of the commodification on everyday life from a perspective of ethics. Nancy Scheper-Hughes’s literature on the commodified body, for instance, has argued the separation between “two populations, one socially and medically included and the other excluded, one with and one utterly lacking the ability to draw on the beauty, strength, reproductive, sexual, or anatomical power of the other” (2002:8). In her pathbreaking analysis of organs and tissue traffic, Scheper-Hughes has illustrated how organs of living or dead – especially of the poor in the Third World and – are sometimes involuntarily transplanted into bodies of the rich in the First World, leaving risks and poor health care for donors. Supplies of organs and tissues are made from the immediate financial needs of the poor in order to make ends meet for their selves and families. A part of body would then instantly become an object of fetish with a label that shows race/gender/health record of the former “owner”. Such commodification of human body treats it as a material object that has its own ends; moreover, it also might create misconception in our culture about human body. On one hand, “selling an organ seems like an act of empowerment” (2002:51) due to its financial benefits for the poor but it also serves “the most basic human desires, the desire for life, vitality and elan” (2003:46) of those who are affluent. Scheper-Hughes has urged an ethical assurance for organ transplantation and the donors has to be protected and not exploited as “the evolution of global *market* has far outstripped the development of a mediating global society equipped with necessary moderating and regulatory functions to preserve human dignity and basic human rights” (2003:39). Whether human body and also emotions should be treated as commodities – or such commodification would degrade its dignity – has to be considered before installing market value and market reasoning.

By agreeing with Scheper-Hughes’s urgency for ethical assurance for the those who are medically and socially excluded in free market, I would argue that for the commodified recognition the problem is not the separation between those who are affluent or not. Rather, it is in its inclusive nature that even the vulnerable – the destitute and lowest strata of society – can afford to buy recognition by sacrificing themselves. My concern is that commodified

recognition itself achieves normative recognition for identity formation. Because then we can conceive of its potential to exploit those who are structurally vulnerable.

Conclusion

Departing from the iconic statement of my informants “I do whatever I want (with my money I have)”, this final chapter has conceptualised commodified recognition in relation to its social impact with some ethnographic descriptions. Throughout the chapter, I have demonstrated that commodified recognition, in the context of *oshi-katsu*, provides agency for women to have the power to determine who they are and whom to belong through long-term consumption. This could be positively received in the sense that it frees women from unpaid emotional labour and commitment in a heteronormative matrix. Allowing women to pursue their desire without any restriction of gendered roles can certainly be read as one form of female sexual emancipation. For instance, a good-looking *oshi* performs the ideal man role who is always gentle, caring, and never complains about women’s appearance in exchange of financial supports from fans.

By close examination of the difference between gift and commodity exchange (Prasad 1999) and bringing it in conversation with my interview with Asuka, as well as anthropological study of how commodified intimacy is experienced in host clubs (Takeyama 2016), I have also argued that commodified recognition functions in equivalent ways to non-commodified recognition. As for those who experience it, it is significant enough for self-realisation since social relations with *oshi* itself is precious and, for fans, it is worth living for.

The problem occurs when a system of self-realisation through commodified recognition leads to self-sacrifice of the structurally vulnerable as the story of Arisa has indicated. Adding to the definition of Quesada et al (2011), I have argued that vulnerability can be self-identified. As well as a social positionality, it is how one conceives of the self, according to one’s own experience of vulnerability in relation to pre-existing social norms. Hence the purchase of commodified recognition is a means for ontological security for them and it is often achieved by self-sacrifice, part of the discourse of virtue in the nature of *oshi-katsu*. Such an inclusivity of free market has led me to the final point. Although the idea of free market, or liberalism is supported by individual freedom and equality, it does not represent the actual conditions of society, but rather it is better understood as a utopian vision of what we long for (Okano 2001). Simultaneously, Nancy Scheper-Hughes’ analysis on the global organ and tissue traffic (2002) has illustrated how commodification itself functions as a mode of production of new behaviour or attitude towards what is being traded. In this sense, I believe commodified recognition

should be considered more than a luxurious commodity but as a new culture in how social relations are formed. I therefore urge for ethical consideration on this note.

My instant suggestion will be Iris Young's social connection model of responsibility, which is distinguishable from retroactive responsibility, also known as the liability model. While the social connection model is to share responsibility towards a better future, the liability model is an attempt to single out those who are responsible. The problem of the liability model, however, is not applicable with regards to structural injustice. The liability model is relevant in order to accuse someone for their illegal, immoral, or faulty action. Social structure, on the other hand, is constantly reproduced through on the one hand, individuals' acts and, on the other, legal practices and institutions. It is therefore not possible to single out anyone just because one's act is potentially harmful to others. In this sense, social connection model of responsibility, I argue, is compatible with the idea of inter-subjectivity in regards to the theory of recognition. It has the core argument of this thesis that self-formation is reciprocal and that the "other" is significant to ourselves. It thus could be argued that relationship with others is prior to the idea of freedom: "This responsibility that assigns freedom to us *without leaving it with us*, as it were – we see it coming from the other" (Derrida in Young 2011:119).

Practically speaking, the idea of sharing responsibility might sound too utopic and frankly even I myself have no clear idea of how to take such a responsibility on an everyday level. Nevertheless, I believe the discussion starts with raising awareness for the risks and dangers that with the popular term *oshi-katsu*. It starts with questioning what is the nature of *osu*, or to support, and how it is important for social relations.

Conclusion

This thesis has discussed *jōsei-muke* AVs and its fan community surrounding male porn actors, *eromen* and *lovemen*, as an example of commodification of recognition in *oshi-katsu*. As I have stated in the introduction, the development of my argument was shaped by often unexpected events and in-depth conversations with my interlocutors. Through the lenses of media practices and fan studies, I have been able to shed light on how female fans of *jōsei-muke* AVs articulate their fan activities, how they contest and negotiate the sex positive discourse produced by the *jōsei-muke* sex industry, and how they act out their sexual desire in order to pursue their projective identification. This eventually led me to a concern with the ethics of the commodified recognition, not only as a researcher but also as a human being. Initially taking an optimistic stance towards the emancipatory potential of these media, I began to see during my fieldwork the limits of this potential and the difficulties of the women I worked with. In many cases they struggled in and were sometimes deceived in the highly neo-liberal market of commodified recognition. I have to emphasise that I am not against *jōsei-muke* adult industry, and that I still believe it could fundamentally empower women; but it has to follow a sense of social responsibility.

To summarise my discussion, I have looked into the previous literature on pornography in order to distil the analytical aspects which are crucial for my own research. Addressing the difficulty of defining pornography in relation to its connotations according to different social and cultural contexts, I have considered the current pornography as a media market genre. This is also resulting from my empathy towards porn studies as an academic discipline that is growing and that sheds light on essential aspects of the human condition. Problems around pornography which had been raised by studies of pornography in Japan, chiefly surrounding its semiotics of gender, carnal identification in relation to viewer's social identity. The first is sometimes associated with the post-war sociocultural struggles in Japan, as in the way that *sei hyōgen*, sexual expression on screen has been a metaphor of socio-political messages in the Japanese film new wave movement during the 1960s. *Sei hyōgen* has been also debated between those who claim it as demeaning to women and those who protect freedom of expression. My argument here followed Masako Kamiya (1995) who encouraged civic actions rather than legal enforcement, gradually challenging gender stereotypes in mass media. Simultaneously, there have been rich arguments among scholars concerning commodification of sex that is commodification of sexual intercourse, sexual services and sexual performance.

The significant points raised were questioning the ambiguity of autonomous wills and structural gender inequality and problematising the nature of commodification itself. These points were crucial in the final chapter on the ethics of commodified recognition. Additionally, pornography has been discussed in relation to its emotional and bodily identification (Paasonen 2011, Akagawa 1996, Morioka 201, Hori 2009, and Mori 2010), which has emerged with the transformation of consumption of pornographic contents, from theatre to private, concerns how social identity of a reader corresponds with pornographic representation. Although there might be a different preference among readers, self-identification should not be fixed according to gender and sexuality of those who read. This became a starting point of my research journey.

From a methodological point of view, I have introduced that fans that are the main focus of my research. Although many respectable inquiries on women's consumption of pornography have been conducted (Tzankova 2015, Wong and Yau 2014, Alilunas 2014, and Nornes 2014), it concerns finding "audience" in a sense of active viewers. I have thus looked into how audience has been discussed in the traditions of media effect theories, cultural studies, and anthropology of media. Influenced by ethnographic studies of audience in cultural studies, anthropology has been also addressing the relationship between mass media and people. Simultaneously, corresponding with the problematization of the term "audience" itself (Hughes 2011), I have employed fan studies (Jenkins 1999) because *jōsei-muke* AVs have a specific fan community both online and offline, my focus was to study those who self-identify as fans and actively engage in fan activities. In regards to my own positionality and reflexivity in the field, I have demonstrated how a one-year experience of field work has become a psychological journey that challenged my own ontological and epistemological perspectives of the world, with an emphasis on my otherness to the world of fandom of *jōsei-muke* AVs.

The thesis departed from a discussion of the Japanese AV industry in order to draw a picture of the historical, cultural and technological backgrounds for *jōsei-muke* AVs. How it emerged in a time when online streaming porn websites experienced a tsunami-like popularity. Developing from the escalation of *sei hyōgen* from unstimulated sex to *honban-koui* in *pink films*, the AV industry, has been developed with an influence from illegal, or non-pixelated materials in the underground market. The AV industry thus remained a focus of social concern for non-consensual and forced labour, which has pushed the AV industry towards reform, including monitoring compliances for worker's rights. In this regard, it has to be emphasised that big conglomerates such as SOD, one of the biggest production companies in Japan, has attempted to maintain a "clean" image, differentiating themselves from more illicit small production companies. Simultaneously, the competition of online streaming sites has struck a

blow to the market of female AV actors. The high-class actresses earn more as they are idolised and supported by many fans, while others' salary kept declining. *Jōsei-muke* AVs has emerged from such a climate of crisis in the whole industry and has struck out a new path by cultivating a female audience with time and disposable cash on their hands.

Despite of yet-to-be-overcome stigmatisation, the genre of *jōsei-muke* has enriched the industry by including female sexual desire: SILK LABO's romantic narrative-based productions and GIRL'S CH's attempt to create a new genre of "man being submissive" have changed what is possible in the depiction of human sexuality. In interviews with those who produce SILK LABO videos, it became clear that SILK LABO films inherited the convention of those romantic TV dramas that depict complicated romantic love relationship of youth as discussed in Iwabuchi (2004). GIRL'S CH, on the other hand, produces titles which focus on traditional *kikaku* style of AVs by employing preexisting formats in the mainstream AVs for those who seek to watch more explicit versions of SILK LABO productions. However, what is common in *jōsei-muke* AVs, is that female protagonists are always the centre of male attention, both romantically and physically. This fantasy of belonging to men is emphasises heteronormative ideas of relationships, in which women are dependent on their male counterparts in the heterosexual milieu that is pornography. The significant "other" in *jōsei-muke* AVs is the male porn actor, *eromen* and *lovemen*. Their approachable "everyman" aesthetics, which is similar to that of Japanese boys' bands, is a significant factor that differentiate them from typical AV *danyū*, overly masculine figures. By regularly appearing in several man meetings, *eromen* and *lovemen* provide a certain set of fantasies which are mediated through SOD products. These media-mediated fantasies have their counterpart in in fan meeting events in similar ways to host clubs. The chapter also looked at how the term *jōsei-muke* itself was problematised by Makino and Fukase. I believe the presence of *jōsei-muke* AVs has brought home to a broader audience that women actually DO have sexual desire in the same way that men are automatically assumed to. In other words, the presence of *jōsei-muke* AVs plays an important role in the gender politics of the AV industry.

The main concern of this thesis was the female fans of *eromen* and *lovemen*, those who actively participate in *oshi-katsu*, a supporting activity which I have defined as the act of support or to cherish on someone or something that one really likes. I have looked at how they engage in *oshi-katsu*, and what kinds of motivations and expectations they have of their interactions with *eromen* and *lovemen* from the perspective of the construction of fan identities (Chapter 5) and their consumption of the *jōsei-muke* fantasy that is sold by SOD and other related businesses (Chapter 6). Female fans enter the fan community of *jōsei-muke* AVs with

specifically tailored nicknames on Twitter in order to conceal their other social identities at home and work. This is to separate their fan activities, to which I have applied Kapferer's notion of *virtuality* (2004), from everyday lives in which women are not supposed to talk about their sexual desire in public. I have employed Washida's theory on face (*kao-ron*) to demonstrate the fan community is constantly shaped by female fans with a certain "face" which is premised on the motivation and purpose to express their sexuality, while dismissing other faces that are considered to be public or authentic. The most attractive aspect of events conducted by SOD was to provide female fans with multiple opportunities to interact with *eromen* and *lovemen*. Drawing from theory of recognition (Honneth 1995 and Taylor 1994), I have argued that female fans gain recognition of their femininity in the specific context of *jōsei-muke* AVs. A certain archetype of gender performance is provided: women attract male attention while men become the agents of their physical or emotional pleasure and satisfaction. Female fans, while they form bonds with each other through verbal, or non-verbal signs to indicate each *oshi*, often compete with each other for how much recognition each fan receives from *eromen* and *lovemen*, in a micro-aggressive way called *maunntingū*. My point here is that the intimate feeling which they receive from *eromen* and *lovemen* is authentic for them. More importantly, the fantasy which *eromen* and *lovemen* provides never fails to serve what female fans crave without any risks of rejection, which often happens in the realm of non-commodified love. In the system of pay as you go, the more one pays, the more recognition one receives. As long as female fans are willing to pay, *eromen* and *lovemen* will never turn away. This rationale of the system is recognition, not a romantic relationship. Rather, it is a social relationship that defines monetary transaction between two parties.

I have argued that such consumption of recognition is the main driving force behind female fans engaging in *oshi-katsu* of *eromen* and *lovemen*. In Chapter 6, I have discussed how *jōsei-muke* AVs as well as its related businesses such as sex toy shops for women and *jōsei-muke fūzoku* promote their services and products in by promoting a notion of women's relaxation, or *iyashi*. My argument here was that such an approach to female sexual emancipation is in direct confrontation with pre-existing bipolarised heteronormative understandings of sexual gender roles: women are considered to be sexually passive and are not supposed to show their sexual desire openly, while this is not the case for men. Female sexuality is conceived of as reactive to male sexual aggression. For those who work for the *jōsei-muke* sex industry, believing in female sexual emancipation, the "framing" of female sexual desire as relaxation is a way of justifying pleasure and to create accessibility for women. The in-depth ethnographic description of the SOD's *Ikemen* Festival, however, has disclosed that dilemmas and conflicts

between various participants at the event regarding their attitudes towards female sexual pleasure. Through a series of conversations with those who have attended the event, it has become apparent that its slogan “women enjoying sex” for female fans is vaguely translated into the passive-active desire to feel wanted and flirted with by good-looking men in actual fan practices. Although my sympathy lies with those who actively engage in female sexual emancipation, this is exceedingly difficult to tackle in light of pre-existing gender norms surrounding systems of heteronormative desire.

My next chapter attempted to sketch the moral career of three interlocutors, Yuri, Yoshiko and Arisa through a series of in-depth interviews in order to understand how they “act out” their sexual desire in the realm of the *jōsei-muke* sex industry. Beyond its contents, female fans like my interlocutors can purchase the embodied version of fantasy which *jōsei-muke* AVs depicts, through *jōsei-muke fūzoku*, where some *eromen* and *lovemen* work as therapists. In order to create stronger emotional bounds with fans, *eromen* and *lovemen* (as well as male therapists) utilise their ability to seduce fans, allowing fans to fantasise and project their own ideas of a relationship the with their favourite. Referring to Goffman’s moral career (1961) as a course of self-construction within the parameters of a confined institution, I have argued that stories of my three interlocutors revealed how they have formed their views of the self and heterosexual relationships through the long-term involvement in *jōsei-muke* adult industry. Yuri and Yoshiko were both seeking a pure relationship in Giddens (1993) with their male “partners” – although each relationship involved monetary transaction. Arisa, on the other hand, put herself into the nexus of commodified recognition in order to rebrand herself from an ugly loser to a sexy attractive woman, modelled after those who perform in AVs. Such a performative and commodified relationship functions as a liminal/limonoid space for women to realise their desire as well as achieve a sense of ontological security, albeit in highly heteronormative manner. Their “desire to believe” in each projected self is itself a strong driving force. The examples of my interlocutors have demonstrated that their projective identification (Giddens 1993) does not only occurs in virtuality, but rather is infused with everydayness, which often generates emotional struggles for those who have a “desire to believe”. The boundary between commodity and gift thus is blurred, especially for those who heavily rely on commodified recognition as I have illustrated through the examples of Yoshiko, Yuri, and Arisa.

The final chapter then attempted to conceptualise commodified recognition, with an issue that arises from the increasingly widespread processes through which recognition and social relationships are bought and exchanged through monetary transactions. By defining

commodified recognition, I have argued that it is a system of self-realisation through consumption. The nature of “support” corresponds with the notion of selfless devotion as a virtue in Japan as self-worth is found in the valiant support selflessly given to others. It is also a power of making a difference to their favourites’ (*oshi*) fortunes (figuratively and literally); that is, as having agency in the world. I have thus argued that it is to have an agency of the world. My question then follows how different a social relationship in commodified recognition is from non-commodified ones. Prasad’s analysis on prostitution (1999) has illustrated the importance of a clear boundary between commodity and gift, which is often infused and confuses those who engage in such highly intimate services. Drawing from Asuka, an owner of *jōsei-muke fūzoku* shops as well as a respectable research of Takeyama’s, I have argued that for those who purchase intimate service there is hardly a distinction between non-commodified and commodified recognition, or between a commodity and gift. The only difference is it has to be sustained by the long-term financial investment of those who purchase services of commodified recognition.

My argument has taken shape when I heard that Arisa was hospitalised in a psychiatry ward for severe depression. It was rumoured that Arisa’s withdrawal from university as well as her debt from visiting host clubs was discovered by her parents, and that they subsequently put her into mental hospital in order to “treat” her condition. The problem of commodified recognition would be revealed when it includes the structural vulnerable that is defined by Quesada et al (2011) as those who experience vulnerability due to each social attribute. I have added up that such an experience is also defined by how one imagines to position oneself in a specific society. While commodified recognition may empower women, it could be exploitive when it is the only thing that keeps the ontological security of the structural vulnerable. The free market society in a country like Japan considers that all individuals are equal, and such belief makes difficult to identify and criticise inequality in the society. It also considers the market is value-free as it is supported by demands and supplies. As in the same way which Nancy Scheper-Hughes’s advocacy (2003) for ethical reassurance in the global organ traffic, my concern is an increasing new culture surrounding commodified recognition in *oshi-katsu* that centres self-realisation. Referring to Iris Young’s social connection model of responsibility, I have come to understand that what is needed is an acknowledgment of our own responsibility, which starts with questioning, analysing, and discussing the nature of *oshi-katsu*.

Since the start of the COVID crisis, however, many things surrounding *jōsei-muke* AVs and its fan community have changed due to the strict regulations of social activities. Unlike many countries, Japan has never implemented a legally enforced lockdown. The *Kinkyū Jitai Sengen*

(“State of Emergency Declaration”), which has been announced several times since 2020, only requires the public to refrain from nonessential excursions and travel between prefectures. Many shops and restaurants were closed while some remained opened including *fūzoku* shops and host/hostess clubs. This meant that refraining from any offline social activities has become a question of individuals’ autonomous wills, which often was a cause for controversy.

It might perhaps not directly relate to the COVID crisis, but *papa-katsu* (papa activity, see Chapter 8) private escorting and *kosatsu* (private porn shooting, see Chapter 7) have since been gaining mass media attention as social problems. The first phenomenon is women, especially those in their 20s, who go on dates with middle aged men in exchange for personal expenses. “Dating” varies from dining to sex, according to price. There are many online apps for matching women and papas, and its popularity is considered to cause financial difficulties for young women amid the COVID crisis. The latter, *kosatsu*, signifies pornographic materials, such as videos and images which are shot privately and sold through online streaming websites. Although its illicit nature of violating penal article 175 (although it remains difficult to apply Japanese law to foreign websites) and laws on non-consensual labour, such “amateur” pornography now outnumbers pre-existing AV industry.

SOD events are now performed online and instax photos of each *eromen* and *lovemen* are sold and delivered to fans who purchase them. While Makino and Fukase e-mailed me how much they have missed the physical fan meeting events, *eromen* and *lovemen* have started to engage with fans actively in online salons. The characteristic of online salons is that its membership subscriptions range from 1000 JPY to 10,000 JPY¹²³ per month. Within this range of price, members can have access to video/text messages from *eromen* and *lovemen* for a minimum price, and private text messages as well as the chance of joining the lottery to win private meetings. Simultaneously, it also has to be noted that a former *eromen*, Sho Kitano has joined the *kosatsu* market and recruits female actor online. The technological development of online platforms, as in the same way with Only Fans¹²⁴, and the restriction for physical fan events have enriched opportunities for fans to interact with their *oshi eromen* and *lovemen*, more directly compared to physical fan meeting events that were organised by SODs.

Such a direct albeit virtual connection to *oshi* is not only limited to idols such as *eromen* and *lovemen*, but has also been growing as a huge market due to the increasing popularity of live streaming services. *Oshi-katsu* itself could be considered to have a positive effect for mental

¹²³ 6.25 GBP to 62.5GBP (1GBP=160JPY).

¹²⁴ The internet content service subscription based in London.

welfare as is often discussed in the context of the experiences of loneliness and isolation during the COVID crisis. Simultaneously, it also provides a neoliberal dream for those who never have had professional training in the arts of entertainment to become a millionaire just by using a camera. Anyone can potentially become an idol once they have set up an account. This enables new pathways for the financial exploitation of those who seek for recognition.

The mediated fantasy which produces virtual “personal” relationships is extended: although video/text messages from *oshi* appear personalised for those who receive them – in the way of one to one personal connection –in fact the platforms enable sending them to vast number of individuals. In 2022, three cases of embezzlement were reported in the Japanese press and in each case, the offender misused huge amounts of money for supporting their *oshi*. Those incidents have not only shed lights on the “addictive” nature of *oshi-katsu* but also illustrated how significant such a virtual relationship – in the sense that it only exists in liminality – with *oshi* is for attaining recognition. This echoes with the projective identification of my three interlocutors as I have discussed in relation to their moral careers. For those who support, recognition that is attained through interactions with their *oshi* functions as a crucial means to attain self-realisation; but for the one delivering the messages, it is just emotional labour (but very lucrative). I would therefore argue that the commodification of recognition is now moving beyond just business and has invaded many levels of forming relationships. In contemporary Japanese society, in which recognition is bought and exchanged, the problem of (or the lack of) recognition is a central key to understanding structural elements of inequality of gender and sexuality. I hope this leaves much scope for future discussions.

Afterword

During my one-year long field work, I have seen several teenagers hanging around Kabuki-chō in Shinjuku at night. Quite a few gathered and seemed to drink and take TikTok videos¹²⁵. As I have described, Kabuki-chō is one of the biggest night towns in Tokyo, full of *fūzoku* shops; undoubtedly not a place for teenagers to “play” at night. By encountering one of them, I have come to realise that *oshi-katsu* and commodified recognition has percolated into youth culture.

Mana, whom I met at the bar owned by a friend of mine, was one of them. She sneaked into the bar with several friends and at the time was already drunk. As the bartender, also a friend of mine, gave her a glass of water, I asked her where she came from. Mana, a 17 years old high schooler¹²⁶, eloped from her parents who lived outside Tokyo a couple of months ago to meet online friends in Kabuki-chō. She stayed in business hotels and Airbnb with friends, and in order to make ends meet Mana and her friends worked at a Con Café (Concept Café is a café/bar in which cosplayed waiters serve customers), faking their ages or sometimes selling sexual services to strangers on the street of Kabuki-chō. “I wanted to escape from my parents. They don’t care about me and only love my younger brother because he does well in school. I don’t have friends in school, but here in Kabuki-chō there are many people who have a similar background to me. So, I’m just staying here”, told Mana while eating Korean fried chicken, which I had ordered for her.

Later I found out that teenagers such as Mana were called Tō-yoko Kids, as they gather at square next (yoko) to Tōho Cinema, a cinema complex in Kabuki-chō. In May 2021 when a teenage couple committed suicide by jumping from a business hotel in Kabuki-chō, these kids attained mass media attentions as social concern. As a journalist and a member of Tō-yoko Kids herself, Chihuahua Sasaki (2021) has explained that this social group started with offline gatherings of *jidori-kaiwai* (selfie community), that is, an online community of those who post their selfies on SNS, such as Twitter and Instagram. Appearing good looking with popular fashions and make ups (for boys as well), they have started to gain online popularity among teenagers. In order to meet such idolised individuals, teenagers had joined Tō-yoko Kids, a phenomenon that was further propelled by the lack of social activities amid the COVID crisis. Similar to Mana, many of them were neglected or abandoned by parents and school

¹²⁵ SNS that specialises short-form videos, which is popular among teenagers.

¹²⁶ I did not include her as the main informant, as she is minor and not a fan of *eromen* and *lovmen*.

communities and therefore Tō-yoko came to function as a kind of asylum where they could take care of each other. However, problems such as child sex labour and overdose of non-prescription drugs are ripe among Tō-yoko Kids.

Sinking her teeth into chicken breasts, Mana told me how she made her living: “I don’t mind sucking the penises of middle-aged men, I consider it my job. When I’m stressed, I take dozens of cold medicines¹²⁷ or meet my *oshi*”. In Mana’s words, her *oshi* is not a professional idol or host but one of her mates among Tō-yoko Kids, which means *oshi-katsu* does not necessarily come with clearly defined services and goods in the market. “I like his charisma and want him to keep his style, that’s why I give him some money. But that’s what everyone here does. If I can be his number one, people will look up to me”, said Mana. Perhaps she only knows two types of men, her *oshi* on one hand who provides a fantasy of recognition and social status and those who purchase sexual services in a lustful manner on the other. While the first appears as prince charming, to whom it is worth devoting one’s life, the latter are just animals which she has to work on as labour. It is again important to emphasise that winning love from the *oshi* is not the aim here, rather to support *oshi* itself functions as social identity in intersubjective relationships. What strikes me the most was that the financial and emotional devotion to *oshi* is cherished as virtue – a form of self-realisation –, and if it is pushed to its limit it would be self-sacrifice, for instance illegal sex labour and debt. Mana also told me that among her mates were high schoolers but that the youngest were still in elementary school. My concern was, of course, the security of those kids and I was surprised that adult men would approach them for prostitution. Simultaneously, a phenomenon such as the Tō-yoko Kids demonstrates that these kids assume that social recognition – in other words self-realisation – is built upon monetary transaction. As Mana told me, “(By supporting *oshi*) I feel happy because for the first time in my life, I have realised my own capacity”

According to Shinjuku Police, in 2022 the number of teenagers that were caught and admonished by the police in Kabuki-chō was 180, a threefold increase compared to the previous year. Similar communities were found in major cities in Japan, such as Dōn-yoko (in Sakae, Aichi) and Guri-yoko (in Minami, Osaka) for teenagers like Mana to seek emotional asylum for themselves, although conceiving physical risks of living on the street. Considering diverse online community of *oshi-katsu*, these concrete offline phenomena might be just the

¹²⁷ *Bron*, a non-prescription cough medicine that contains codeine phosphate, methylephedrine hydrochloride is used for causing a state of euphoria (see more at A Case Report for ‘Bron’ Abuse by Morinaga et al 2016).

tip of iceberg of commodified recognition. As I have discussed in this thesis, the virtuality of *oshi-katsu* – a liminal sphere in which to gain or restore recognition – functions as a safe place for those who have been marginalised in everyday lives. Despite of its romanticised image of support or devotion, it undergirds a system which is potentially exploitive. Drawing from the example of Tō-yoko Kids, my concern is how to redeem social relationships without monetary transaction, or perhaps whether such an idea of pure relationship will become anachronistic in the near future. I strongly believe that ethical discussions on commodification of recognition is crucial in regards to gender, intimacy, and social relationships in contemporary Japanese society.

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PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM
研究参与同意書

Introduction

はじめに

The purpose of this form is to provide you with information so you can decide whether to participate in this study. Any questions you may have will be answered by the researcher or by the other contact persons provided below. Once you are familiar with the information on the form and have asked any questions you may have, you can decide whether or not to participate. If you agree, please either sign this form or else provide verbal consent

この同意書の目的は本研究参与者にその意思を確認するものである。参与者のいかなる質問・疑問点は研究者（小高麻衣子）または下記に記載されている指導教官（Dr. Fabio Gygi）が明確にする義務を有する。研究参与者は研究内容を理解した上で、参加の意図を決断する権利を有する。研究参与に同意する場合は、下記を熟読した上で署名するか、または、口頭により参加の意思を明確にする。

Research title: Female friendly pornography in modern Japan and its fandom
研究題目: culture 「現代日本における女性向け AV とそのファンカルチャーについて」

Type of Project: PhD Research 博士研究
研究種類:

Project funders: Sasakawa Postgraduate Studentship グレイトブリテン・サ
研究出費者: サカワ財団 / SOAS Fieldwork award ロンドン大学東洋ア
フリカ研究学院フィールドワーク賞与

Project partners: N/A
共同研究機関:

Research coordinator: Miss Maiko Kodaka 小高 麻衣子 601882@soas.ac.uk
研究者:

Purpose of Research: The aim of the research is to understand the sociocultural dynamics around female friendly pornography in Japanese contexts and to contribute to the wider academic field concerning sex, gender, and mass media.
研究の目的: 日本における女性向けポルノグラフィを、人類学を用いてジェンダー、メディアスタディーズという視点から、その社会・文化的意義を考察する

<p>Reasons for data collection: データ収集の目的:</p>	<p>Due to the nature of my research, I selected participants who engage with female friendly pornography from production and fandom 本研究の性質上、女性向け AV に関わる人（制作側・消費者側）に参加を依頼する。</p>
<p>Nature of Participation: 研究参加の特徴:</p>	<p>Each interview should be approximately within an hour. The use of recording device will be discussed with participants beforehand. Every participant will be able to decide whether personal data is anonymised or not. インタビューは1時間以内とし、録音機器の使用はインタビュー前に参加者と相談の上で決定する。参加者は個人情報匿名にするよう申し出る権利を有する。</p>
<p>Risks and Benefits of participation: 参加におけるリスクと有益性:</p>	<p>Participants might feel uncomfortable during the conversation about sensitive topics. I will make sure my research is comfortable for participants at any point of the project, which shall be confirmed during the discussion of the informed consent. 本研究の性質上、参加者がインタビュー中に性的な話題を不快に感じる可能性がある。その際は、研究者が責任を持って快適なインタビュー環境を提供し、不快な点・疑問点は研究参加同意の話し合いの際に明確にする。</p>
<p>Data Sharing: データの共同使用:</p>	<p>There will be no one except me who will have an access to the data. The confidentiality of the research subject will be respected and follow the SOAS ethic guideline. 本研究者（小高麻衣子）以外のデータの利用は一切禁ず。情報の秘密保護はロンドン大学の研究倫理ガイドラインに準じるとす。</p>
<p>Countries to which the data may be a transferred: データ移動国:</p>	<p>I will collect my data in Japan and later transfer to the UK. 研究データを日本で収集した後、博士論文執筆のため英国に移動する。</p>
<p>Security measures: 情報保護の方法:</p>	<p>I will use the password protected OneDrive for storing field notes and audio-recorded data パスワード保護されたOneDriveにデータを保存し、編集の際はPCのWIFI接続を切る。</p>

**Methods of
anonymisation:**
匿名性:

Participants will be fully anonymised unless they explicitly wish to feature under their own name
研究参加者は、本人の希望がない限り匿名とする。

**Methods of
publication:**
研究発表:

The data will be used for my PhD thesis. I will make that my responsibility towards my informants will not end with the completion of the research
研究データは研究者（小高麻衣子）の博士論文執筆に使用される。参加者からのデータに関する研究者の責任はフィールドワーク後も継続して厳守する。

Withdrawal of Consent
同意の破棄

Please note your participation is voluntary and you may decide to leave the study at any time. You may also refuse to answer specific questions you are uncomfortable with. You may withdraw permission for your data to be used, at any time up to August 2019, in which case notes, transcriptions and recordings will be destroyed.

研究参加は任意のものであり、参加者はいかなる時も参加の意思を取り下げることができる。また、2019年8月以前に限り参加者の情報が研究データとして使われることを拒否できる権利を有する。その際は、研究者は情報が保存されている全てのものを破棄する。

Data Protection Statement
情報管理

Information about you which is gathered in the course of this research project, once held in the United Kingdom, will be protected by the UK Data Protection Act and will be subject to SOAS's Data Protection Policy. You have the right to request access under the Data Protection Act to the information which SOAS holds about you. Further information about your rights under the Act and how SOAS handles personal data is available on the Data Protection pages of the SOAS website (<http://www.soas.ac.uk/infocomp/dpa/index.html>), and by contacting the Information Compliance Manager at the following address: Information Compliance Manager, SOAS, Thornhaugh Street, Russell Square, London WC1H 0XG, United Kingdom (e-mail to: dataprotection@soas.ac.uk).

本研究中に収集された参加者の情報は英国に保管され、英国の情報保護法、またロンドン大学の情報保護法によって厳守される。参加者は情報保護法に基づき、ロンドン大学が保有する個人情報を利用する権利を有する。その他の参加者の権利についての情報はロンドン大学ウェブサイト (<http://www.soas.ac.uk/infocomp/dpa/index.html>)、情報保護に関するページ上で入手

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Contact Information

連絡先

Telephone No: [Include both your UK mobile number and the local phone number you will use or set up]

Email Address:

Postal Address:

Alternative contact: [Include your supervisor's name and contact details or other colleagues on your research project]

Research Participant Declaration

I confirm that I have read the above information relating to the research project. I freely consent to my information being used in the manner and for the purposes described, and I waive my copyright and other intellectual property rights as indicated. I understand that I may withdraw my consent to participate in the project, and that I should contact the project coordinator if I wish to do so.

私は上記の研究に関する情報を確認し、私の情報が研究に使用されることを同意す

る。また、私の著作権・知的財産も上記に述べられたように破棄する。本研究への参加を破棄できる権利を理解し、その際は研究者に連絡をする。

Participant Name :

参与者名

Signature :

署名

Date :

日付

Researcher Name :

研究者名

Signature :

署名

Date :

日付

PLEASE KEEP THIS FORM FOR FUTURE REFERENCE